

The Southern Star

in partnership with



WEST CORK  
**BUSINESS  
& TOURISM  
AWARDS**  
2023

**Who will win?**

Profiles of all categories, finalists and sponsors inside

**#WestCorkistheBUSINESS**

Pitch Night Sponsor



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## West Cork Business & Tourism Awards 2023

# Record entries a sign of a vibrant West Cork

WELCOME to the West Cork Business & Tourism Awards for 2023!

These special awards, now in their fourth year, illustrate the essential attributes of successful local businesses across our region ... namely clear focus and vision, quality products and services, great customer service, effective sales operations, creative marketing and last, but not least, determination to succeed and hard work.

This year we saw record numbers of entries for our awards from 80+ businesses, and we take that as a compliment! We think it's indicative that these awards are well respected across the business and tourism communities of West Cork and we thank everyone and every business who took the time to submit an entry.

I'd like to congratulate the businesses that have been shortlisted as finalists across the different awards categories but also to say to the businesses that didn't make it through to the finals to consider entering again next year as I know the judges found it very challenging to make their decisions based on the overall quality of entries that existed.

In December we held our now famous 'Pitch Night' (thank you to our pitch night sponsor OfficeMaster who hosted the event with us in the superb facilities of the Ludgate Hub, Skibbereen). As in previous years I was blown away by our finalists – local business people from all over West Cork and from all types of businesses - presenting their three minute 'elevator pitch' to a packed room which included not only the judges but their fellow finalists as well. Not an easy thing to do! On display at the 'Pitch Night' was passion, creativity, ingenuity, humour, innovation and collegiality from businesses both big and small, new and well established.

I would like to sincerely thank Carbery for their support of the West Cork Business & Tourism Awards as our main awards partner for this year. They are a great example of a West Cork business which contributes to the local economy and community as well as being a national and international success story.

Thank you to all of our awards category sponsors for your valued support too, Access Credit

Union, Blackwater Motors, Collins Brooks & Associates solicitors, Cork Airport, Cork County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Lilly, MasterKabin and OfficeMaster.

Thank you also to our judges, Jason Hawkins and Aine Hallihan, Carbery; Paul Di Rollo, Glentree Furniture and Patrick Murray, OfficeMaster

A big thank you to my team at Southern Star Media who do a great job delivering these awards across all aspects of our operation – editorial, marketing, digital, video, design, print, sponsorship, finance – there's a huge amount of work involved and a lot of people behind the scenes. Thank you also to Sandra Maybury, our dedicated awards project manager who has done a superb job.

Finally, my biggest thanks must go to all the businesses that entered this year's awards. Thank you for taking the time to enter and I wish you all every success in the future.

**- Seán Mahon**  
managing director,  
Southern Star Media



## Deeply rooted in the West Cork community

CARBERY is honoured to partner with the Southern Star in presenting these esteemed awards.

As a company intrinsically woven into the fabric of West Cork, we deeply recognise the pivotal role that both business and tourism play in bolstering our economy and enriching our communities.

It brings us immense pride to be a part of this initiative that shines a light on the remarkable achievements and invaluable contributions of businesses and individuals throughout the region.

**- Jason Hawkins,**  
chief executive officer,  
Carbery



Jonathan Healy, known for his presenting work with Newstalk, Sky News, RTE, and Cork's RedFM will be MC for this year's Southern Star 'West Cork Business and Tourism Awards' which are run in partnership with Carbery.

With over 25 years of experience in Irish broadcasting, Jonathan, managing partner of Healy Communications, brings a wealth of experience and a diverse portfolio which spans thousands of interviews with prominent figures across various sectors.

Beyond broadcasting, he is also involved with charitable causes including as voluntary Chairman of the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association.



## THE JUDGING PANEL



Jason Hawkins,  
chief executive officer,  
Carbery



Aine Hallihan,  
director of R&D,  
Carbery



Patrick Murray,  
business  
development  
executive,  
OfficeMaster



Josephine O'Driscoll  
manager,  
Wild Atlantic Way  
Fáilte Ireland



Paul Di Rollo,  
owner and director,  
Glentree Furniture Ltd

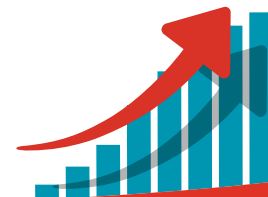


Chairperson of  
judging panel:  
Seán Mahon,  
managing director,  
Southern Star Media

Please note: The decisions of the judges will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

## The Southern Star

Advertise your business to West Cork's biggest audience



NEWSPAPER  
READERS  
**50k**



WEB AUDIENCE  
**150k\*** **360k\***  
UNIQUE MONTHLY VISITORS  
MONTHLY PAGE VIEWS  
\* Google Analytics 2023



SOCIAL MEDIA REACH  
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FACEBOOK • INSTAGRAM  
• TWITTER



MAGAZINES  
25+ EACH YEAR FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCE GROUPS

AWARDS SCHEMES  
SPORT FARMING BUSINESS & TOURISM



# West Cork Business & Tourism Awards 2023 – Finalists



## Best New Business

sponsored by Collins, Brooks and Associates Solicitors

- Billy's Rent a Goat
- Occupational Health Solutions
- The Family Edit
- Wizard & Grace

## Best Small Business

sponsored by OfficeMaster

- Charles P. Crowley & Co, Chartered Accountants
- RH Vintage Interiors
- The Skibbereen Food Company

## Best use of Creative Marketing

sponsored by Masterkabin

- Casey's Bar & Restaurant
- Celtic Knot Events
- Sharon Huggard Style & Body Confidence Coach

## Best Family-Run Business

sponsored by Cork County Council

- Atlantic Sea Kayaking
- Gougane Barra Hotel
- The Blue Loo Bar

## Best Tourism Experience

sponsored by Cork Airport

- Dursey Boat Trips
- Kinsale Mead Co.
- Two Green Shoots

## Best Customer Service

sponsored by Blackwater Motors

- Bantry Bay Charters
- Fernhill House Hotel
- Future Forests

## Best Medium/Large Business

sponsored by Lilly

- Eccles Hotel & Spa
- Glenview Heating
- Kinsale Hotel & Spa

## Young Businessperson of the Year

sponsored by Access Credit Union

- Cian Minihane – CM Fitness & Personal Training
- Jack Regan – Trend 7 Media
- Olwyn Hanley – OI Over It Creative
- Shannon Bennett – Smooth Beauty Group

The gala awards luncheon takes place in The West Cork Hotel on Friday, February 2nd, 2024

## Thank you to our awards sponsors



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí  
Cork County Council

# Congratulations to all of the finalists in the 2023 Southern Star West Cork Business and Tourism Awards

Carbery plays a proactive role in our local communities by creating jobs, buying local and supporting educational, community and charity groups.

Global company, local heart





Employees doing local beach clean ups as part of our volunteer hours programme



Connecting students with farming through our school to farm trial programme



Proud headline sponsor of 2023 West Cork Business and Tourism Awards



Improving opportunities for local students



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Supporting local community awards and events

[carbery.com/about](http://carbery.com/about)



**CARBERY**

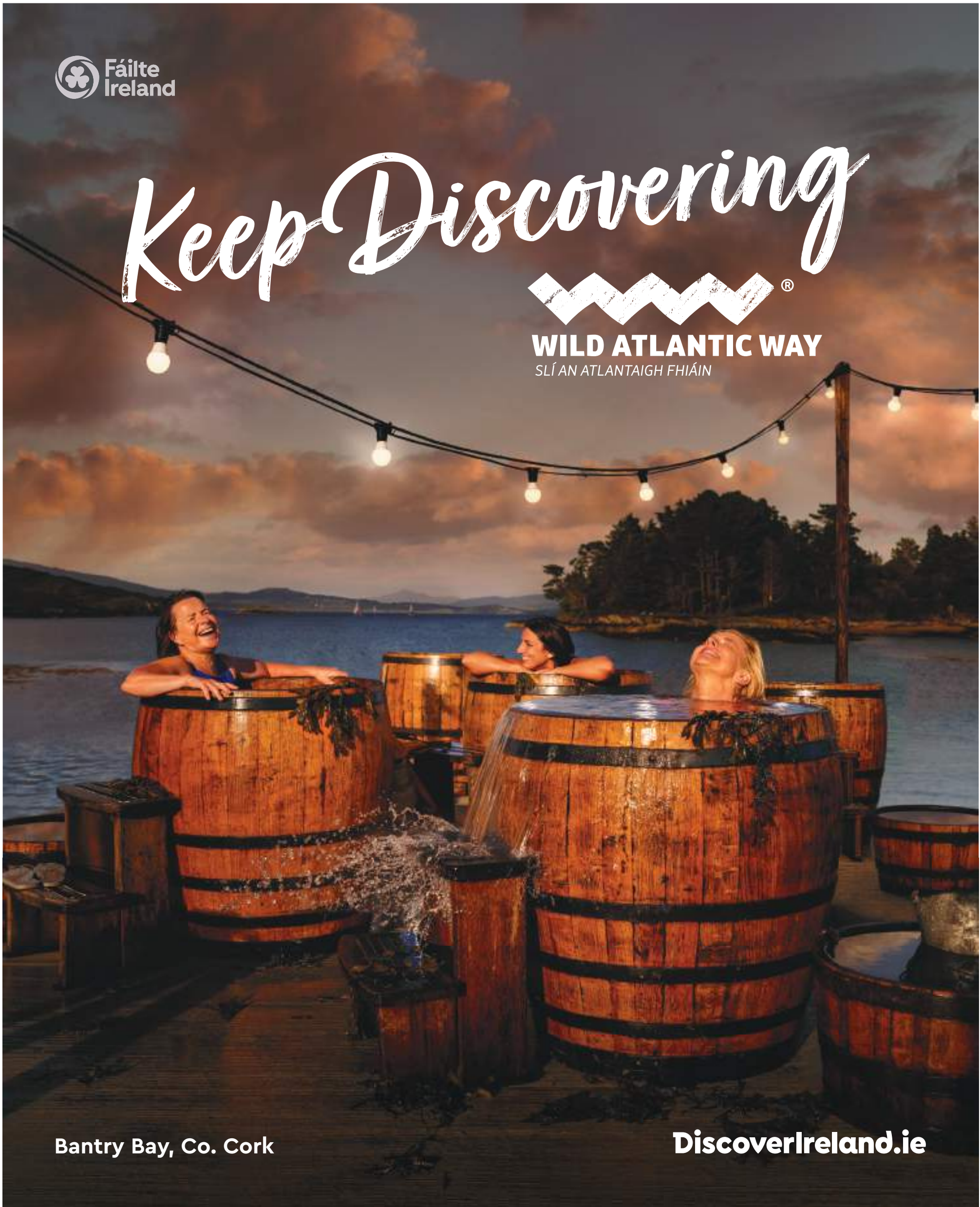




# Keep Discovering



**WILD ATLANTIC WAY**  
SLÍ AN ATLANTAIGH FHIÁIN



Bantry Bay, Co. Cork

[DiscoverIreland.ie](https://www.discoverireland.ie)



# Welcoming business in West Cork!

FÁILTE Ireland is delighted to sponsor the 'Best West Cork Wild Atlantic Way Business' Award in the West Cork Business & Tourism Awards again in 2023. Originally established in 2019 the award is made by the judges to a tourism business that brings the Wild Atlantic Way regional experience brand to life, the business offers an authentic experience and continue to innovate their tourism offering to attract more visitors to West Cork throughout the year and is done in a sustainable manner.

Stretching 2,500km from Kinsale in West Cork to the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal, the Wild Atlantic Way is the longest defined coastal touring route in the world and has become a household name in Ireland since it was launched by Fáilte Ireland in 2014. The Wild Atlantic Way was designed to celebrate our rugged coastal landscape and reposition the West Coast of Ireland as a compelling and unique holiday experience and with so much to offer, from stunning landscapes to excellent food, West Cork is the perfect place to start or end a journey along the route.

Fáilte Ireland, working with our many industry and agency partners recently launched a five-year Destination & Experience Development Plan (DEDP) for West Cork and Kenmare taking in a wide geography from Kinsale along the coast to Kenmare in County Kerry which allows the three West Cork peninsulas to benefit from the plan. The plan also covers the Mhuscraí Gaeltacht area and all of the West Cork islands. The plan itself can be accessed via the following link [Failte Ireland - West Cork and Kenmare Destination and Experience Development Plan | Experience development | The Wild Atlantic Way](https://www.failteireland.ie/welcoming-to-learn), or scan the adjoining QR code.

The objective of this long-term commercial development plan is to give a fresh insight into what makes West Cork & Kenmare a distinctive singular destination to visit along the Wild Atlantic Way and strengthen the value of tourism to the local economy without compromising the environment or culture of the region. Developed with input from local businesses and communities, Local Authorities and key stakeholders, this plan identifies the standout features

for each area and provides a framework for businesses to present these experiences in a way that tourists can easily understand. Our vision for the Wild Atlantic Way is to deliver sustainable growth to all areas of West Cork and Kenmare which in turn will deliver real benefits for local communities and businesses.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2024, the Wild Atlantic Way has been a huge success with both with domestic and international visitors and, as the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland is committed to building on this success and developing tourism in West Cork & Kenmare further. We will continue to work with local tourism businesses to ensure they can offer the best visitor experience and attract tourists outside of the summer season to grow employment and revenue in the West Cork area. The success of the Wild Atlantic Way is very much testament to the strong partnership we have with local industry and communities and this award recognises the achievements of a tourism business who is striving to embody the Wild Atlantic Way brand.

Fáilte Ireland provides a range of supports for businesses from tailored development programmes to useful research market insights, templates and check lists - check out <https://www.failteireland.ie/welcoming-to-learn> or get in touch with your local Wild Atlantic Way team to find out how we can support your business.



– Josephine O'Driscoll  
Wild Atlantic Way manager  
for West Cork at  
Fáilte Ireland

Scan the  
QR code for  
more about  
the West  
Cork and  
Kenmare  
DEDP



## Get in touch

Web: [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie) | Email: [waw@failteireland.ie](mailto:waw@failteireland.ie)



Spain Tower near Baltimore, with Roaringwater Bay and the Mizen peninsula in the background.

## Dursey Boat Trips – the West Cork Wild Atlantic Way Tourism Business for 2023

BY EMMA CONNOLLY

CONCERN over rural depopulation and a deep-rooted belief that there was an opportunity to bring more visitors to the Beara Peninsula saw Paul O'Shea launch his business, Dursey Boat Trips.

That was in back in 2019, and Paul now employs 17 people with plans underway to expand the business this year.

He's a motor mechanic by trade running Berehaven Motor Works where he employs five people. It was while he was chairman of his local community centre that his awareness grew of rural depopulation from the locality.

'I really became aware of the need to create employment to keep people here,' said Paul.

His late father Vincent was involved in the fishing industry, fishing for mackerel off Garnish Pier.

'At that time in the 70s there would have been 80 to 100 people working in the industry seasonally and I would have heard him talking about the tourism opportunity to take people to the Bull Rock.

'My father-in-law Dick O'Driscoll was a light keeper and spent time on Bull Rock and he felt the same,' said Paul.



Dursey Boat Trips offers visitors to Beara the opportunity to take in this spectacular peninsula on exhilarating boat trips filled with stories, history and wildlife. (Photos: Paul O'Shea)

He took the plunge and launched the business with his cousin Jason Sheehan, hatching the plan in McCarthy's Bar in Castletownbere.

Jason Sheehan's family have been involved in the fishing industry for generations, and their knowledge of the local sea conditions is second to none. Jason's Grandfather James Sheehan was the first operator of the Dursey cable car.

Starting out with a six-seater rib, Dursey Boat Trips now has three boats, each with a capacity of 12.

Currently on offer are two trips – the Bull Rock Trip and the Castletownbere Harbour Trip – which run seasonally from April through to September. The Bull Rock Trip goes around

Dursey Island and then, off the western point of Dursey, they head out to three islands; Calf Rock, Cow Rock and Bull Rock. As well as stunning scenery and wildlife, passengers are treated to local history on everything from lighthouses to shipwrecks on route.

Customers come from all over Ireland, as well as overseas.

'Last year we had lots of Americans, Europeans and also Chinese, many of whom are living in this country, as well as people from all over Ireland,' said Paul.

Winning the West Cork Wild Atlantic Way Tourism Business 2023 award is, Paul said, a huge endorsement of what he and his team are striving to achieve.

'And that's bringing people to the outer end of the Wild Atlantic Way and showing off Beara to the world,' he said proudly.

Plans for 2024 include expanding their offerings to include corporate activity weekends, featuring hill walking, stone wall building as well as harbour tours.

'Our feelings is that if can get people here, it will help other business as well, it's about feeding into that bigger picture.'

Paul's dad Vincent passed away before the business was launched but he's certain he'd have been impressed by what he has achieved.

'I think my dad would be proud of us, proud of our determination to make a living for ourselves at home, and to help retain the population in the Allihies parish.'





# office master

*Work Happy*

## MODERN OFFICE FURNITURE

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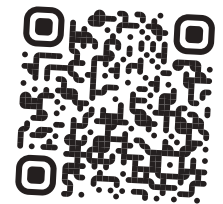
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PATRICK MURRAY & DAVE MCCARTHY

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Showroom also available at OfficeMaster, 93 Meaghers Quay, Waterford X91 AVR7



**TALK TO PATRICK**  
(086) 1364 284  
[pmurray@officemaster.ie](mailto:pmurray@officemaster.ie)



**TALK TO DAVE**  
(086) 1452 774  
[dmccarthy@officemaster.ie](mailto:dmccarthy@officemaster.ie)



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# **RECRUITING?**

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**The Southern Star**  
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Meet the Collins, Brooks & Associates team – front: Bebhinn Murphy, Emma O'Brien, Denis O'Sullivan, Maria O'Brien. Back: Róisín Cahill, Jim Brooks, Roni Collins, Lorna Brooks, Conrad Murphy.

# Trusted legal advice for 80 years

COLLINS, Brooks & Associates LLP, Solicitors, is a vibrant medium sized firm situated in Clonakilty offering an array of legal services to the people of West Cork and beyond. We pride ourselves on our ability to provide practical and innovative advice to our clients near and far.

With a team of nine solicitors and 24 staff in total we offer expert services in all areas of law both to our private and commercial clients.

Collins, Brooks & Associates or more commonly known as "Collins Brooks" was established by Liam M. Collins, nephew of General Michael Collins, in 1943. It quickly established itself as one of West Cork's best known and respected law firms. Thomas J Brooks, known locally as Jim Brooks, joined the firm in the early 1970's and the firm's reputation grew from strength to strength.

The firm continued to evolve over time and is now spearheaded by three partners, namely, Roni Collins, Lorna Brooks and Conrad Murphy.

At Collins Brooks we have an ability to adapt and embrace change utilising the latest in technology to provide efficient and timely service to clients in

Ireland and internationally. We also retain the practical and personal approach which has seen us help thousands of people throughout years of practice in dealing with some of the most difficult and important moments of their lives.

With nine experienced solicitors from diverse backgrounds we have solicitors who have the expertise in whatever area of law arises. We have dedicated people in different departments to ensure each client receives the best representation whatever the issue.

Our property department provides a comprehensive service in conveyancing and mortgaging of residential, commercial and agricultural properties. Our estate and probate department provide services in relation to estate planning, drafting of wills and the administration of estates which can be an onerous time for a family when a loved one passes away. We regularly advise clients on leases for commercial premises in addition to the intricate intricacies of licensing laws.

Our litigation department can frequently be found in the High Court, Circuit Court or District Court throughout the country fighting and defend-

ing the rights of their clients. Our litigation services include personal injury claims arising from car, workplace and public liability accidents, negligent construction cases, breach of contract, debt collection and criminal defence work. We have an employment law department which advises employer and employee clients and is regularly involved in unfair dismissal, constructive dismissal and other employment legislation disputes at the Workplace Relations Commission and Labour Court. At Collins Brooks our litigation team has extensive experience in working for both the Plaintiff and Defence side of claims therefore we have an insightful knowledge in how to deal with all claims in a tactical and efficient fashion.

Our location in the beautiful town of Clonakilty allows us to enjoy the quality of life which West Cork has to offer and we are proud to have a strong association with our locality. Location is no longer a barrier to success or access in today's technological world and we act for clients countrywide and indeed worldwide. You might meet our Solicitors in Clonakilty, Cork, Dublin or Limerick on any given day.

We are proud to sponsor the Best New Business Category and want to congratulate the finalists in every category at this year's awards. The creation

of new businesses in the West Cork area is essential to helping West Cork thrive and keeping the area at the cutting edge of entrepreneurship. We applaud

anyone who has the drive, enthusiasm and ingenuity to start a new business and the four finalists are glowing examples of such traits.



## COLLINS BROOKS & ASSOCIATES

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6/7, Rossa Street, Clonakilty, Co. Cork





## Best New Business – Sponsored by Collins Brooks & Associates Solicitors

### Billy's Rent-a-Goat

# A truly natural solution

WILLIAM Walsh is striving to show people that there are opportunities in the green economy with his unique business.

Called Billy's Rent-a-Goat, it's a broad-spectrum, chemical and machinery-free solution for dealing with invasive plants and overgrowth.

'Goats are a superior choice in hard to reach or environmentally protected areas, especially those with prevalent invasive or problem plant overgrowth. Over time, goats will restore the landscape to a healthy native ecological balance,' explained Enniskeane-based William.

He employs targeted grazing, which means that native plants are protected from the goats, using solar powered goat fencing, while they feed on and clear the non-native and invasive plants.

His mission statement is: 'To provide an ethical land management service with a variety of methods including goats, na-

tive species rehabilitation and educational social support.'

The educational, social and community aspect has become an unexpected focus of the business, in operation for around two years.

'Having goats at schools creates great beneficial educational and social dynamics and encourages conversations about land care, climate proofing, diversity of species and ecosystems,' he said.

William and his goats are involved in a project working with Heritage Ireland at the Ardmore Cliff Walk, and were also used to clear invasive plants from Beaumont Quarry near Cork city as well as helping to clear an overgrown walled garden at Bantry House, and a graveyard in Crosshaven.

Going forward, William's plan is to establish the start-up in the next few years and then begin to implement other working models along the same lines.



**William Walsh of Billy's Rent-a-Goat.**

'It's about creating an ethical business model that encourages a climate proofing shift from linear to cyclical processes. We share our passion for well cared for species and ecologies in a wider context and look forward to seeing goats and humans working together in hubs around Ireland creating stronger and more resilient native ecosystems and communities.'

### Occupational Health Solutions

# Good health, good work

PREVENTION is paramount, and we strive to proactively support organisations in cultivating healthy and resilient teams.

That's the commitment of Carol Deasy who runs Occupational Health Solutions (OHS), a company on a mission to enhance the well-being and productivity of workforces globally.

Among its key ergonomic services are personalised virtual and in-person ergonomic assessments worldwide and comprehensive consultations for workspace design and optimisation.

Occupational health services include virtual and in-person assessments, including sick notes and return-to-work plans, led primarily by physiotherapists and nurses.

'OHS distinguishes itself by employing occupational health physiotherapists to oversee sick notes and return-to-work plans, a unique offering in Ireland. Our commitment to data-driven, preventive care,



**Carol Deasy, Occupational Health Solutions.**

and a global network of experienced healthcare professionals ensures superior service quality,' said Union Hall based Carol.

'Moreover, we actively engage in campaigns and initiatives to advance the field of ergonomics and promote work-life balance in Ireland and across Europe,' she added. At OHS, she said, they leverage technology to connect people and deliver customised solutions, ensuring that employees can work comfortably and safely, no matter where they are located.

'Our holistic approach not only benefits organisations by reducing absenteeism and improving employee engagement but also contributes to the overall well-being of the workforce,' she said.

Carol highlights that OHS, which comprises a team of four, is a 'prime example of a business that actively contributes to job creation, with a unique twist.'

'We not only create jobs but focus on generating remote employment opportunities.

By doing so, we are supporting rural economies and communities, reducing geographical employment disparities, and giving talented individuals in remote areas access to meaningful work.

'From our humble beginnings as a one-woman operation in Union Hall, we have expanded our footprint globally in ergonomic services and nationally in occupational health.'

OHS has, she says the potential to redefine the healthcare landscape and improve workplace health.

### The Family Edit

# Helping hand for families

THE Family Edit came about from a genuine problem experienced by a first-time-mom.

Bandon-based Gemma Kingston felt she couldn't find a trusted source of information for families to find out about things in their local area, or an area they were visiting.

'I decided then and there to create the solution and The Family Edit was born!' she said.

The business is an online hub designed to showcase the best of family-friendly Ireland, from pregnancy right through to the primary school years.

'Our website connects families with the top recommended family-friendly businesses in Ireland across 11 categories of business types e.g. accommodation, pregnancy and baby classes, kids activities, indoor and outdoor activity providers, cafes and restaurants, events and camps,'



**Gemma Kingston of The Family Edit.**

she explained.

Crucially, it operates on an invitation-only basis.

'This means all businesses listed on our website have been tried, tested and recommended by families from all counties in Ireland,' she said, adding that they champion businesses across West Cork, and nationwide.

Once invited to the website, businesses can then

choose from a monthly or yearly subscription option, said Gemma who has over 30,000 followers on Instagram.

'From the outset, I had a dream for The Family Edit to be the number one website for families in Ireland, and in October that dream became a reality when we were voted Best Family and Baby Website in Ireland in the NUK Mums & Tots Award.

This is a testament to the strength and loyalty of our families and family businesses,' said Gemma.

She has also been accepted onto the Acorns programme this year. It's designed to support early-stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland.

'This is an absolute honour, and another dream list achievement! This is going to help accelerate our business growth, and help us to take The Family Edit to the next level.'

### Wizard & Grace

# The very best intentions

WIZARD & Grace create essential oil intention candles and self-care products, designed specifically for women to support their well-being.

'While there are many candle brands on the market, the majority of candles, even those that claim to be natural, use synthetic fragrance or artificial perfume to scent,' explains founder, Kinsale-based Paula McGovern.

'Wizard & Grace uses only 100% aromatherapy grade essential oils in each candle, blended specifically to support a self-care need. So, not only do our sustainable candles smell beautiful they can actively support your well-being through the therapeutic value of essential oils.'

The purity of ingredients used is what sets the business apart. As well as 100% natural essential oils, Paula only uses vegan and renewable rapeseed and coconut wax.

'Many candle makers still use paraffin or as a natural alternative soy. Soy is a non-renewable plant to grow at scale, even the

non-GMO version and is causing deforestation and social justice issues in origin countries,' she said. Her commitment to sustainability goes further: all labelling and printing use recyclable paper and vegetable inks, while individual candle boxes are compostable and outer packaging is completely plastic free.

'Every element of our work has been well considered to ensure a sustainable non-toxic product,' said Paula.

She has also created original artwork greeting cards and high-end luxury journal products with Cork-based business Badly Made Books to provide a complete gifting solution with candle, journal and greeting card. The self-care element to her business is also important.

'Our candles are designed to support people's wellbeing and to be used as a wellness aid – a reminder to stop and breathe and take a moment for self-care in a busy life. We do this through our use of Gaelic intention words, our high-design aesthetic, which is inspired by Irish



**Paula McGovern, Wizard & Grace.**

(Photos: AndyGibson)

landscapes, Celtic mythology and the vibrancy of the Book of Kells.'

Since launching in 2022, the business has surpassed the targets she set and she has been selected by Enterprise Ireland as a participant on the New Frontiers 2 Entrepreneurship programme.





The team at OfficeMaster.

# Helping to create an appealing and productive workspace

THE world in which we work has changed and businesses have had to adapt in line with the new norm. OfficeMaster, which celebrated 50 years in business in 2023, is not only growing and looking to the future, but is also helping clients all over the country to do the same.

The OfficeMaster ethos is, as its tagline states, all about 'Work Happy'. Whether this is working from home, at the office or a combination of both – employees now expect a lot from their working environment. To encourage staff back to the office, employers are having to review their available workspaces. Certainly, one factor that remote working has highlighted is the importance of ergonomics.

Ergonomics is just one area in which OfficeMaster excels. In fact every member of the sales team has been trained as ergonomic assessors. Ergonomics focuses on creating environments that are safe, comfortable, efficient and suited to the needs and capabilities of individuals using them.

It takes into consideration factors such as posture, movement, physical exertion, and cognitive abilities to manage the risk of injury, strain, and discomfort. By applying ergonomic principles, workplaces can enhance productivity, reduce fatigue and musculoskeletal disorders, and promote overall health and wellbeing for employees.

A well-designed office can also contribute to creating the right impression for clients, prospects and potential employees. With the steady popularity of hybrid and remote work, office aesthetics

and facilities are more important than ever. An office refurbishment is a great opportunity to revitalise and refresh your surroundings without having to move to a new office. A refurb has a whole host of other benefits including improved space utilisation, whether you need a large office desk for collaborative projects or a standing desk for flexible working options, an office redesign allows you to create a space that works best for your unique office needs. A quality office project can also lead to a more harmonious and productive work environment.

Employers who take the physical comfort of their staff into consideration by providing modern and agile workspaces with ergonomic office furniture are more likely to have and retain happy and productive employees.

If you would like to get some office fit-out inspiration, be sure to visit our showroom at Northpoint Business Park or check out our case studies with client testimonials online. We've worked with some of Cork's biggest names, including Laya, Maxi Zoo, Enable Ireland, ICBF, Keelvar, Cork Chamber and more. We'd love to work with you next!

Let's discuss your next project; we offer a full range of services including space planning and design, product and finishes selection, project management and post-project support.

Get in touch with our experienced team, Patrick Murray (086) 1364 284, email [pmurray@officemaster.ie](mailto:pmurray@officemaster.ie) or Dave McCarthy (086) 145 2774, email [dmccarthy@officemaster.ie](mailto:dmccarthy@officemaster.ie) Visit us online at [www.officemaster.ie](http://www.officemaster.ie)



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## Best Small Business – Sponsored by OfficeMaster

### Charles P Crowley & Co Chartered Accountants

# A unique accountancy offering

PROVIDING personal tax services to individuals and companies who may be tax-resident outside of Ireland and living in West Cork is a niche service delivered by Charles P Crowley & Co Chartered Accountants in Bandon.

Typically, professional tax/financial advice for an individual seeking such a service would not be available in rural Ireland. However, the business, set up over 35 years ago, recognised the demand and felt it had the expertise to deliver in this area.

To provide an efficient and

comprehensive service in this area, the firm has invested significantly in and greatly expanded its software facilities, which are compatible with software abroad and greatly enhance the practice offerings.

Caroline Crowley, daughter of the company principal, Charles, who is a chartered accountant and chartered tax consultant is the head of this department, and given the success of the service, other employees are now also being trained in this area.

'We developed our own website ([www.cpcorkaccountants.com](http://www.cpcorkaccountants.com)) for the purpose of promoting this offering and making the general public aware of our offerings in this area. The North and West Local Enterprise Office supported our firm and offered financial assistance as they felt this was a most innovative service,' said Charles.

'The success of this offering has resulted in providing stable employment for our staff and consolidated the existence of the firm into the indefinite future,' he added.

As an insolvency practitioner, he also successfully de-

veloped a Personal Insolvency Practice.

'We are the only firm in West Cork providing this service,' he added.

Meanwhile, around 15 years ago, the firm acquired and developed an old mill in Bandon to accommodate its future business activities and development. The historic building was reconstructed into a state of the art premises, while maintaining its original features to accommodate its current staff of 12, three of which are members of the founder's family. It has since won many prizes.



Charles Crowley of Charles P Crowley & Co.

### RH Vintage Interiors

# Making vintage and antique furniture more accessible



Rita and Ian Holding, RH Vintage Interiors.

RITA and Ian Holding have a passion and talent for design, colour and sustainability and are sharing it at their business, RH Vintage Interiors, based at the Old Creamery in Connonagh.

The couple source, restore and deliver high quality, one-of-a-kind pieces of antique and vintage furniture. They also offer a restoration and chalk painting commissioning service from a separate workshop on the premises.

'Our aim is to fulfil our clients' needs, by matching their personality and lifestyle with beautifully sourced products that revitalise a space, resulting in an inexpensive, impactful, and inviting home environment,' said Rita.

'We are also driven to make antique and vintage interiors more appealing and affordable to all ages by providing clean and stylish pieces and to remove the dark and dusty image it may have had in the past,' she added. The couple have thoroughly researched this market and have found that as well as beautiful aesthetics, choosing antique and vintage furniture has great environmental benefits.

'Since opening at The Old Creamery in February 2022, we know the trend for this type of furniture and other decorative pieces is continuing to grow. Feedback from our customers and suppliers, is that there is a rediscovery of traditional craftsman-

ship and as a result, it makes perfect sense to buy antique and vintage furniture for your home or office space. It is also possible to mix 'old' and 'new' as long as it is tastefully done,' she explained.

By adding a coffee trailer this summer, the location developed into a destination for people traveling to West Cork where they can take a break, drink great coffee, and peruse the shop's eclectic treasures.

'We are educated, creative by nature, intuitive, with exceptional interpersonal skills and we believe these are extremely important attributes to possess in this business. RH Vintage Interiors will continue to evolve in the coming years,' Rita pledged.

### The Skibbereen Food Company

# Skibb-based chef making waves on snack market

A RECIPE of skill, attention to detail and resilience has proved the perfect mix for Matthew Brownie of The Skibbereen Food Company (TSFC), an outsourcing snack company that provides unique, premium and healthier pork and corn snacks to the Irish and UK markets.

In business for almost 10 years, TSFC has three product ranges with nine product lines which are available in four of the major retailers in Ireland, with a fifth onboard in 2024.

A professional chef who is originally from New Zealand, Matthew first developed the idea of the unique snack after studying Culinary Arts at Cork Institute of Technology in 2011.

While using new product development methods, and incorporating British, Irish and a bit of Kiwi gastronomy, he created the snacks which are MSG, gluten and dairy free and also high in protein.

Over the past nine and a half years, he has grown TSFC significantly and it's now exporting into the UK, Belgium and Germany, which has created new pathways into Europe and the UK and will continue to grow, he said.

'By using creditable distribution companies along with online portals such as Amazon UK, TSFC innovates new and improved snacks which adds to the already successful snack



Matthew Brownie of Skibbereen Food Company.

(Photos: Andy Gibson)

ranges it has, which creates growth, more revenue and brand awareness. TSFC has the ability to scale to triple turnover with new and exciting snacks in the pipeline,' he pledged.

Matthew is also a regular on

Irish television with appearances on Virgin Media on Ireland AM, and runs his company from a laptop and a phone from his Skibbereen home, where he manages everything from logistics to new product development to networking.





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## Best Use Of Creative Marketing – Sponsored by Masterkabin

### Casey's Bar and Restaurant

# Sustainability and inclusivity to the forefront

GOING the extra mile for the community, customers and climate is at the core of Casey's Bar and Restaurant in Clonakilty.

James Casey has run the business on the town's Pearse Street for the past nine years, during which time it has earned the title 'Best Irish Local Pub' at the VFI Irish Pub Awards.

Top-class entertainment is always on the menu at this establishment and despite the tough conditions faced by the hospitality sector in recent years they have continued to provide live entertainment three to four nights a

week. However, sustainability and inclusivity are also important facets of the business.

'We're committed to sustainability, having candlelit music sessions to reduce power consumption and utilising gun-operated soft drink systems to minimise waste,' said James.

Being connected to the community is also very important to the team at Caseys.

'Whether it's fundraisers for local causes such as a recent event where 50% of profits went to the Rapid Response Unit, free Christmas dinners for those in

need, or accommodating foreign tour groups for afternoon tea, we contribute meaningfully to the community, fostering a sense of belonging and warmth and welcoming everyone with a smile,' said James.

Commitment to inclusivity is showcased, he said, through thoughtfully designed spaces in the pub, tailored for individuals with specific needs such as autism.

'We create a serene environment by adjusting lighting and music, ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable experience for eve-

ryone,' added James.

James and his team of 24 also take an interactive approach when it comes to customer engagement.

'Through our innovative business cards attached to the bill, adorned with a QR code, we invite patrons to share their experiences and suggestions seamlessly on our social media channels and TripAdvisor.

This open line of communication enables us to continuously enhance our offerings based on valuable feedback, making each visit better than the last.'



Katie Shanahan; James Casey and Ciara O'Shea of Casey's Bar & Restaurant, Clonakilty.

### Sharon Huggard, Style & Body Confidence Coach

## Helping women to realise their full potential

SHARON Huggard is driven to helping women all over the country, and globally, to realise their self-worth.

The Innishannon-based style and body confidence coach works with women who 'are hiding and holding themselves back, to elevate how they dress, think and feel so they can live the life they desire and deserve, creating impact and knowing they are enough.'

She founded the business four years ago and her mission is to support women with her qualifications as a fashion stylist, life coach, body confidence coach and NLP/ Quantum Thinking Transformation (QTT) Practitioner.

'In a recent study 91% of women reported they were unhappy with their bodies. Nearly 70% of women report withdrawing from activities due to their body confidence. Through my work helping hundreds of women it was evident that so many were hiding and holding themselves back due to poor body confidence,' she said.

That was the catalyst for Sharon to create The Worthy Woman Academy and her international campaign called #getinthepicture.

'I invited women on International Photography Day, 17th August 2022 and again in 2023 to get in the picture as they were, knowing they were enough. It is time to stop erasing history. I am proclaiming enough is enough,' said the



Sharon Huggard, Style & Body Confidence Coach.

mum-of-three.

The campaign resonated hugely with women, and Sharon did it on a budget of less than €100, while rearing three teenagers, servicing her existing clients and growing her business.

'There is no marketing team, no virtual assistant, no external support or funding, no budget but what there is, is a woman with a big dream who

is on a mission,' she said.

'Body confidence has taken a hammering, thanks to Covid-19, societal views, social media, but I am determined to emancipate as many women as I can. My legacy will be that women, their daughters, and their daughters deserve to feel worthy, valued now not deferring their dreams until they look a certain way,' Sharon declared.

### Celtic Knot Events

## Trust and reliability are vital to great event planning

SOURCING local, but with an international reach is at the heart of Bantry-based creative wedding and event planning business Celtic Knot Events.

Set up by Sharon Thomas, the business specialises in creative style weddings including outdoor weddings where the venue is built from the ground up using tipis, marquees, stretch tents, flooring, staging, lighting, sound engineering equipment and furniture.

'Much like a mini festival, a lot of work is involved to bring an event like this together,' said Sharon who has run the business for three years.

'Many of our clients are overseas based so it is very important to us that we provide them with premium quality events and seamless planning. We bring their vision to life, so they have nothing to worry about.'

Key to delivering that impeccable service is working with local suppliers right across the board from the wedding suppliers to the food producers.

'We also organise ticketed events such as mindfulness and health and fitness events, with many more exciting events to come,' said Sharon.

Creative marketing is very much to the fore at Celtic Knot events Sharon explains, as she sources and



Sharon Thomas of Celtic Knot Events.

(Photos: Andy Gibson)

collaborates with the best suppliers in the events industry to showcase available talent, usually through innovative photoshoots.

'We bring a team of businesses together, sourcing models, photographers/ videographers. We set up a scene to promote each suppliers' products/services, and photograph/video scenes much like a movie production set. We then cross promote each other on social media platforms which helps to gain

new followers, creates business referrals and creates quality marketing content. We have been lucky enough to have had many of our photoshoots published, including an overseas publication.' All of this, she points out, is also completely free marketing.

'We also make the most amazing connections, which bodes well for future business partnerships, it builds trust, quality and reliability which leads to business sales for all involved.'





# Supporting business and jobs

‘CORK County Council’s role is to promote Cork County as an attractive location for business to locate, grow and expand, for people to invest in and a place for employers and employees to work and live. The Council works to support business and the creation of employment, in co-operation with enterprise support agencies, entrepreneurs, community groups, and other stakeholders.’

The Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Frank O’Flynn and Chief Executive of Cork County Council Valerie O’Sullivan highlight how, ‘As a Council, we support the development of the county’s industrial and commercial infrastructure, including business parks, industrial sites and incubator units. We work with international, national, regional, and local partners to promote Cork, and facilitate exports, trade and sharing of best practice. We support our local ratepayers through a variety of capacity raising initiatives as available from our Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), retail and town centre initiatives and finally we provide financial support through the Economic Development Fund.’

In 2022, 70 businesses received LEO grant assistance totalling €1.24m with a further 143 enterprises approved under the Trading Online Voucher scheme for grants of up to €2,500 to develop and/or enhance their online presence. The Council’s LEO’s are actively working with a portfolio of over 500 financially supported businesses throughout the county employing more than 2,100 staff. Local Enterprise Offices also provide a wide range of high-quality training and development supports designed to meet specific business requirements. In 2022,

over 2,000 people were trained by the Council’s LEOs across 170 different programmes, with over 634 business participants availing of specialist free business mentors.

For those looking for somewhere to start their business, Cork County Council offers 54 units to rent comprising a mix of industrial, food, office and hotdesking. The Council also supports the ECentre project, such as Bantry and Fermoy in conjunction with bonafide community organisations together with other centres across the county and at wholly owned Council companies at Macroom and Youghal.

In conjunction with the Council’s business support offer, Cork County Council continues to be a leader in the development of the county’s tourism product and in marketing Cork abroad as a must-see visitor destination, as well as being a significant financial contributor to many festivals and events held throughout the county each year.

Cork County is the largest county in the island of Ireland. With over 7,500 km<sup>2</sup> of land, 1,100 km of coastline and 1,200 km of rivers, it has much to attract visitors. Tourism is noted as a major economic activity across the county with festivals forming a key part of the tourism economy if they are marketed well to visitors and used as a means of attracting people into a destination.

Investment in festivals can have a significant economic return for business, can assist in raising the profile of a town or region and can also provide local employment. West Cork is instrumental as an asset to attract further tourism growth and has received significant investment

from Cork County Council in the areas of product development, festival supports and marketing initiatives.

Identified as a destination town, a revised scope of works are currently being finished for Bantry. Centered around decluttering existing signage, set to be replaced with new wayfinding signage, this will shortly go to tender in ongoing engagement with Failte Ireland.

The works, when completed, will encourage the visitor to dwell longer in Bantry town with associated economic benefits generated.

Funding of €100,000 awarded under the Shared Island Local Authority Development Fund in late 2022 to progress a feasibility study was completed in November 2023. This ‘Four Points’ project examined potential to create sustainable tourism experiences to link and cross promote the four extreme geographic points on the island of Ireland including Brow Head in West Cork, identified as Ireland’s most southerly point. This project aims to connect cultural experiences together with the shared promotion of the interconnected projects.

Cork County Council also provides a wide range of Tourism Marketing and Festival supports.

This season, a total of 20 festivals in West Cork were funded through Cork County Council’s Local Festival Fund, Economic Development Fund and General Tourism Budget to the value of €94,500. Cork County Council undertook a specialist review designed to enhance the festival programme for Leap Scarecrow Festival in order to maximise its economic impact in the off season to the West Cork economy. The devel-

opment of a new website for the festival was also financially supported.

The ‘Green Your Festival’, aimed at assisting festivals implement sustainable initiatives, grant scheme continued in 2023 with seven festivals funded across West Cork. Cork County Council continued to support a number of marketing initiatives in the West Cork area in 2023 including Bantry Tourism and Development Association, West Cork Islands and the Gaeltacht Mhuscraí Region to the value of €23,000. West Cork Walking Trails continued to receive financial support in 2023 towards the costs of maintaining significant walking trails such as Sli Gaeltacht Mhuscraí, Beara Way and Sheeps Head.

Discover lots of these trails for yourself by downloading the Explore Cork’ Tourism app. The app provides over 850 places to see and things to do across a range of 19 categories, is available in 4 languages; English, Irish, French and German, can be downloaded on Apple and Google Play stores with a dedicated Trails Section to discover the county on foot. There really is something for everyone on Explore Cork. For more information on any of the topics mentioned visit [www.CorkCoCo.ie](http://www.CorkCoCo.ie)



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí  
Cork County Council





## Best Family-Run Business – Sponsored by Cork County Council

### Atlantic Sea Kayaking

# Sharing the wonders of West Cork's coastline

JIM and Maria Kennedy were well ahead of the curve when they set up their family business, Atlantic Sea Kayaking, 30 years ago.

Operating from Reen Pier, Union Hall, using double sea kayaks as a means of transport they offer a diverse range of unique tours (by day and night) designed to share the wonders and secrets of West Cork's coastline, its wildlife, seaweed foraging, caves, bioluminescence and star-filled night skies.

'We recount stories of the

pirates and the amazing history of the area,' says Jim, who said that when they started out there were very few people in the country venturing onto the sea in kayaks.

'In fact there were very few activities on offer at all in the area for tourists. We have been very involved with Fáilte Ireland promoting Ireland as an adventure destination over the years and were ambassadors for Fáilte Ireland. We also did lots of work with the schools and communities around West Cork over the years,' he added.

The couple played an important role in founding the Irish Association for Adventure Activities and say they were fortunate to have got plenty of publicity both in Ireland and abroad.

'This certainly helped to get West Cork out there to the world,' said Jim.

They've picked up plenty of awards over the past three decades including being voted one of the top 10 activities worldwide by TripAdvisor.

'And only last month we were voted in the top 10 activities in

Ireland by National Geographic,' said Jim.

All of the family have been involved in the business at some point, and currently on board with Maria and Jim are their sons Naoise (24) and Adam (26). In all the team comprises 16.

'We have built a sustainable and visitor-friendly business which gives our family the option to stay in West Cork and make it even a better experience in the future which can be passed on to further generations,' concluded Jim.



Jim, Maria and Naoise Kennedy of Atlantic Sea Kayaking. (Photo: Andy Gibson)

### Gougane Barra Hotel

# Five great generations of experience in hospitality

FAMILY is to the fore at Gougane Barra Hotel with the fifth generation of the Lucey family at the helm of the business overlooking St Finbarr's Oratory and island.

'Our family of Cronin's moved to Gougane Barra as water bailiffs (circa 1854) and took lease of the landlord Townsend's hunting lodge,' explains Neil Lucey. 'Donnacha Cronin opened a shebeen and acquired a hotel licence for his property. In time he passed it onto his son James and Bridget Cronin. Cronin's Hotel was established and was home to the Gaelic movement. The first Irish language training college started in Gougane in 1903. Connie, the youngest son built Gougane Barra Hotel, next door to his home in 1936. He married Joan Manning (Nana) and they ran the hotel successfully until the 1960's. Their daughter Breda (my mother) and her late husband Christy Lucey (my father) continued the family tradition until we took over the day to day running of the hotel in 2005.'

Neil is married to Katy Vaughan from Lahinch, who he met in hotel school in Galway and their children Conor, Jane and Ali are now also part of the hotel team which comprises 32 staff at peak times.

Service is taken seriously at the 25-bed seasonal hotel,



Neil Lucey and Katy Vaughan of Gougane Barra Hotel.

with Neil front of house, and Katy in the kitchen.

'We genuinely love what we do. Our energy comes from our team and the many different guests we meet from all over the world every day. We want our guests to feel at home and relaxed when they are here and renewed and re-energised when they are leaving.'

He feels they offer guests an authentic experience:

'Family-run hotels offer a natural hospitality, unforced and charming, providing an authentic experience for guests. Gougane Barra Hotel has been passed down through generations, 87 years with the same family.

'We feel lucky and privileged to continue the tradition of hospitality in Gougane Barra and appreciate that we are the minders of something very special,' said Neil.

### The Blue Loo Bar

# An important part of the community for 150 years

AS well as being a popular family business, The Blue Loo Bar is also a well-known tourist attraction in Glengarriff and an important part of the community.

As its name suggests it's painted bright blue and it's also a reference to the nearby blue pool.

Christopher Harrington inherited the bar when he was just 10 years old, after the death of his father.

'My mother Eileen Collins stepped in until I had garnered enough life experience to take over the operations of the business. With the help of the Harrington family and especially my mother, we have now developed what was once a quaint bar in a West Cork coastal village, into a dedicated tourist hotspot, where people gather for parties, weddings, and the joy of storytelling old and new,' said Christopher.

The business goes back five generations and 150 years and as well as being popular for tourists, it's a very important social hub for Glengarriff and the wider community and employs a team of 12.

'We pride ourselves in live music throughout the year, and offer the true experience of West Cork while relaxing with friends and family while you soak up the village atmosphere - and the toasty fire!' said Christopher.

Like so many others in the trade, Covid-19 was the true



The Blue Loo Bar in Glengarriff.

test of the business, he said, when they were forced to close their doors for the first time in 150 years.

'However I was able to utilise this time wisely and construct a large sheltered outdoor beer garden with capacity to host large functions and a safe

space for all to enjoy without any worries. With close to 5,000 accumulated followers on social media so far, it's an honour to be part of something so beneficial to the surrounding area. I look forward to seeing what the next 150 years will bring.'





# ITALY

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## Best Tourism Experience – Sponsored by Cork Airport

### Dursey Boat Trips

# Passion and enthusiasm for an ‘enchanted place’

DURSEY Boat Trips offer visitors to Beara, an opportunity to take in the spectacular peninsula on an exhilarating boat trip filled with stories, history, wildlife and the most incredible views.

Currently on offer are two trips – the Bull Rock Trip and the Castletownbere Harbour Trip – which run seasonally from April through to September.

The Bull Rock Trip goes around Dursey Island and then, off the western point of Dursey, they head out to three islands; Calf Rock, Cow Rock and Bull Rock. Whales, dolphins, basking sharks, seals

and otters are regular sights.

The Castletownbere Harbour Trip also features wildlife, history, lighthouses and shipwrecks as they travel along the length of Bere Island.

‘As visitors embark on any of our trips, they are greeted by experienced guides who are passionate about sharing their knowledge and love for this enchanting place,’ said Paul O’Shea, Garnish native and co-founder of Dursey Boat Trips, which was set up in 2019.

‘Their enthusiasm is contagious, igniting a spark of curiosity within every passenger. From

the moment you step foot onto the boat, you know you are about to embark on a journey that will leave an indelible mark on your soul.

‘All 17 members of the team at Dursey Boat Trips take huge pride in showcasing the local coastline, lighthouses, islands and its wildlife. We pride ourselves in offering great value for money and exceptional customer service,’ added Paul.

Dursey Boat Trips also cater for all types of groups including corporate, hen and stag parties, photography groups, school tours,

birthdays and other occasions.

‘We offer trips on the most up-to-date open ocean-going ribs, equipped with latest comfort and safety equipment onboard. Our skippers are all experienced seamen, coming from the fishing industry, RNLI and the BIM Regional Fisheries College,’ said Paul.

He said their business has also helped to open up opportunities for other businesses in the area such as bike hire, walking tours, restaurants and accommodation.

After all, it’s a rising tide that lifts all boats!



Paul and Caoimhe O’Shea, Dursey Boat Trips.

### Kinsale Mead Co.

## From the bee to the bottle



Denis and Kate Dempsey, Kinsale Mead Co.

IT’S not every business can say they’ve been chosen to appear on television shows with internationally renowned chefs, but Kinsale Mead Co can!

They were visited by Neven Maguire and featured on RTÉ’s ‘Neven’s Seafood Trails’ as well as Masterchef John Torode for ‘John Torode’s Ireland’ also on RTÉ.

It was all in a day’s work for the first Irish meadery in 200 years whose vision and passion lies in rediscovering the art of mead-making and creating a range of award-winning Irish meads.

‘Using the best techniques of modern wine-making and carefully selected, pure honey and fruits, our meads are 11-12% ABV, packed full of flavour and refreshingly different. We

develop, craft and bottle them all by hand and they are all produced in our small, family-run business in Kinsale from bee to bottle, and are now judged as among the best meads in the world,’ said co-founder Kate Dempsey who set up the business with her husband Denis six years ago.

‘We run popular tours and tastings in the meadery in Kinsale, bringing visitors to West Cork from near and far. We take them on a journey through the rich history of mead and how it is woven through Ireland’s myths and legends,’ added Kate.

Sustainability is at the core of the business: ‘As members of the National Biodiversity Plan and gold certified members of Origin Green, we are commit-

ted to educating visitors on the huge importance of biodiversity for all our wild pollinators as well as for bees,’ she said.

Their tour consistently wins five star independent reviews and they are consistently ranked in the top three attractions in Kinsale in Tripadvisor ‘Since 2018 we have grown each year in visitor numbers and income, 90% in our second year (ignoring the Covid years), 53% and 2023 year to date we are looking at 39% increase and counting from 84 different countries to our small family run-meadery in West Cork.’

The business employs three full time two part time and two seasonal full time and also works with other local businesses as part of various food tours and boat trips.

### Two Green Shoots

## Small business, big heart



Kloe Wood and Adam Carveth of Two Green Shoots.

(Photos: Andy Gibson)

NOURISHING people and the planet is what Glengarriff’s Two Green Shoots is all about through its gardens, feasts and escapes.

In 2018 they opened The Botanical B&B and The Botanical Bell Tent – two boutique accommodation offerings that celebrate and connect guests with the surrounding landscape.

‘The same year, we also opened the gates to The Garden of Re-Imagination. This showcase edible garden paradise gives visitors the chance to see and taste the incredible diversity of flavours that can be grown here from bubblegum berries to pink peppercorns through a range of garden tours and food experiences,’ said co-founder

Kloe Wood Lyndorff.

Then in Spring 2023, they cut the ribbon on a brand new foraging trail which connects people with native wild plants through immersive guided foraging walks and fireside lunches.

‘As a tourism offering, we’re tiny!’ said Kloe. ‘Just a four-bed B&B and a single glamping unit with experiences weekly on Fridays and Saturdays. However, being small means our team of two can craft something really special. Not having hundreds of covers, means we can generously fill plates with nutrient-rich ingredients that we have sown, grown and then picked less than an hour before they’re enjoyed.’

‘Being part of our local

community means we not only hear about others producing the ingredients we can’t but know of the best nights to see the bioluminescence in the bay, the hidden coves for wild swims, the cosiest pubs that are showcasing amazing local singers,’ she said.

Two Green Shoots is also about moving tourism beyond ‘leave no trace’ to giving guests the opportunity to ‘leave a positive trace.’

‘We’re tackling the problems too. For our 2023 season we launched a ‘Sea Plastics Project’ with support from Clean Coasts giving our guests and visitors 10% off their stay or tour for completing a beach clean during their time in the area,’ concluded Kloe.



# Blackwater Motors Volkswagen

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## Best Customer Service – Sponsored by Blackwater Motors

### Fernhill House Hotel

# Maintaining a long-held tradition of great service

FERNHILL House Hotel is a family-run hotel specialising in weddings and family occasions.

'Customer service has been the very cornerstone of the business since our grandmother Mary O'Neill from Skibbereen opened Fernhill as a country house hotel in 1967,' said proprietor Michael O'Neill.

'With our fantastic team of over 120 people that are all West Cork based, we carry on that tradition of striving for the best customer service today as our grandmother would have wanted,' he said.

The hotel is famed for its gardens, and everything in the business takes its inspiration from them, he added, including Fernhill's own gin, food, decór, fresh floral displays, sustainability and more.

The venue has won a range of top awards of late including 'The best wedding venue in Ireland' at the gold medal catering awards which is judged with undercover judges personally inspecting customer service.

'This year Fernhill was named the fifth best hotel in Ireland on

TripAdvisor and the best in Cork in their annual awards. It is based on customer satisfaction reviews over a number of years so we are delighted. We have consistently been the best ranked hotel in West Cork for the past decade.

Also, Ann Cullinane our wedding coordinator won 'Munster wedding coordinator of the year' as voted by happy brides who were delighted with her customer service,' said Michael.

Fernhill was also recently invited to join Ireland's Blue Book.

'They are very strict about who

joins as the standards are so high and you have to undergo a series of undercover visits where everything has to be perfect. We achieved all these awards and more while also striving to be sustainable and have won several awards for that also,' he added.

Achieving such a standard of customer service, he said, is done by 'fostering a culture of excellence, finding and growing the best team possible to implement it and then using a constant practice of planning, reviewing and training to implement standards.'



Michael O'Neill and Anne Cullinane, Fernhill House Hotel.

### Bantry Bay Charters

# Offering a diverse range of customer experiences

BANTRY Bay Charters is all about helping its customers make meaningful memories, and doing it in a sustainable way.

The Glengarriff-based businesses, in operation for three years, is more than just about offering boat trips around the harbour, explains owner/manager Sharon O'Rourke.

'We offer a diverse range of experiences that showcase the local wildlife, history, and our commitment to environmental sustainability. Our team of experienced guides are well-versed in the diverse marine life found in Bantry Bay and its surrounding areas. From dolphins and seals to various species of birds, we offer wildlife tours that allow visitors to observe and learn about these fascinating creatures in their natural habitat. The guides provide insightful information about the behaviour, habitat, and conservation efforts related to the local wildlife,' said Sharon.

As part of the experience, guests have the opportunity to help haul a lobster pot and observe the crustaceans inside.

It's important to note however, that all these creatures are released back into the sea, highlighting Bantry Bay Charters' commitment to sustainable fishing practices and the preservation of marine life.



Darren O'Sullivan, Bantry Bay Charters.

The charters also provide a rich local history of the area, providing engaging narratives, anecdotes and historical facts, making the tours both educational and entertaining.

The business prides itself on its highly knowledgeable and professional staff. The team consists of experienced guides who are passionate about the local wildlife, history, and conservation efforts. This expertise and enthusiasm shines through in every interaction, and detailed information is provided, with staff answering questions, and engaging visitors in

meaningful conversations. 'Customers come onboard as strangers but leave as friends,' said Sharon.

Attention to detail and dedication to meeting the individual needs and preferences of customers is very important to the team. From the moment a booking is made, the team at Bantry Bay Charters goes above and beyond to ensure a seamless and enjoyable experience. They take the time to understand the specific requirements of each customer, whether it's a family outing, a group excursion, or a solo adventure, and tailor their services accordingly.

### Future Forests

# From small seeds grow mighty Forests!



Maria Collard and Maeve Kelly, Future Forests.

(Photos: Andy Gibson)

IN business for 37 years, Future Forests garden centre and mail order nursery nestled in the hills between Bantry and Gougane Barra, has deep roots in West Cork.

Set up by Mike Collard and his late wife Cathy over 35 years ago, also onboard now is their daughter Maria, her husband Matt Keane and Maria's brother Christy.

Future Forests offers a wide choice of potted plants year round as well as bareroot plants from November to March, with a particular focus on fruit, hedging and native trees. Irish plants are sourced wherever possible and top nurseries in Europe are found to supply what can't be sourced locally.

Testament to the quality of

product and service is the fact that customers often drive from as far away as Clare or Sligo. After launching their website in 2018 with photos and descriptions of thousands of plants, they are now one of the leading nurseries in Ireland for mail order.

The nursery is run using environmentally-friendly methods and the main wooden building was built using local timber by Christy and has evolved over the years.

A cafe, The Coffee Bee, housed in recycled shipping containers was added in 2021 and is very popular with locals and visitors alike, making Future Forests a destination in its own right.

'The team really do try to go above and beyond when-

ever they can. This starts with sourcing the very best plants, then when picking orders for customers they have a strict criteria, the plants must be the very best of the batch and in top condition, orders are carefully checked off by two people to avoid any mistakes and then the plants are very carefully packed by the experienced packing team so that they should arrive to the customer in perfect condition,' said Maria.

'The feedback from visitors is that the range and quality of plants on offer is what makes the business stand apart. The outstanding customer service that is offered both in the nursery and by phone and email keeps people coming back time and time again.'





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## Best Medium/Large Business – Sponsored by Lilly

### Glenview Heating

# A range of services from an 'exceptional' team

GLENVIEW Heating, Adrigole, Beara started out as a one-person operation 30 years ago when founder Finbarr placed an ad in *The Southern Star*.

Fast forward to today, and the team has expanded to over 20, and the business offers a diverse range of cutting-edge services.

The core business of the family-run firm, is the supply, service and installation of heating and plumbing systems in domestic, commercial and industrial projects, both new and retrofit.

Its strengths lie in the range of services it can supply, which streamlines the number of people needed on a project, ultimately making it a smoother experience for the client.

'No job is too big or too small for us either. Every job is considered equal whether it is a new build or renovation of an existing bathroom,' said Finbarr's son Sean. 'And it doesn't matter what day of the week it is either. We are driven to return comfort to people's homes – plumbing and

heating systems are the glue that holds a home together.'

Glenview Heating has also been entrusted to work with a number of HSE-run hospitals, as further evidence of their reputation to deliver.

The business has also evolved to become a leader in renewable energy solutions, providing among other things, PV panels, heat pumps and geo thermal energy systems.

'That's becoming more important, in a bid to help clients save

energy costs, and as part of the climate battle,' said Finbarr who said the focus will be in growing this aspect of the business to meet demands for sustainable homes.

He singled out their 'exceptional and dedicated' staff, some of whom have been with the business for more than 20 years.

'That's down to good relationships we have with each other and it means that the team carries a wealth of knowledge and experience.'



Finbarr and Seán O'Shea, Glenview Heating.

### Kinsale Hotel & Spa

# Going that extra mile to provide top-class service

WE'RE a four-star hotel that in many aspects can rival a five-star in the industry!

So says the 100-strong team at Kinsale Hotel & Spa which is set on 90 acres of mature, wooded parkland with views overlooking Oysterhaven Bay.

As well as luxury accommodation, guests can enjoy its Elemis Spa, state-of-the-art leisure club, fine and casual dining opportunities in the Rockpool Bar & Restaurant, award-winning weddings, meetings and event space, ensuring a well-rounded experience says Michelle Butler, sales & marketing professional at the hotel.

The hotel has won many accolades since it opened nine years ago. In 2022 and 2023, it was a finalist in the Cork Digital Marketing Awards in various categories.

'In December 2022, we were awarded WeddingDates Top Rated Venue Cork and Top-Rated Venue Munster in the annual Wedding Dates Awards. This award was obtained from past wedding couple reviews, where we beat all wedding venues in Cork and Munster to gain the top spot,' said Michelle. In January the hotel was a finalists in the Gold Medal Awards in several categories including: Ireland's Hotel Casual Dining Experience, Ireland's Afternoon Tea Hotel, Ireland's Four-Star Hotel Spa Experience.

'In January 2023, we were awarded with the CIE excellence award – this award



Michelle Butler, Kinsale Hotel & Spa.

was peer-reviewed, and we received over 92% satisfaction rating from guest surveys (travellers from around the globe).

'In March, we were publicly nominated and were finalists in the Irish Restaurant Awards in the following categories: Best Casual Dining, Best Restaurant, Best Chef, Best Restaurant Manager, Best Hotel & Guesthouse Restaurant.'

Michelle said the team used

the time of the pandemic to review and improve their offering which they feel has been demonstrated in their award nominations and wins.

Profits are put back into improving the hotel with major bedroom renovations currently on the agenda. Occupancy increased by 13% and the rate by approximately 22% this year which the team believes is down to its hard work and efforts in customer satisfaction.

### Eccles Hotel & Spa

# A blend of charm, comfort and a wonderful location

BELIEVED to be one of the country's first hotels, over its 275-year history the Eccles Hotel & Spa in Glengarriff has welcomed well-known guests that included WB Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, and Pippa Middleton.

Suffice to say its walls have rich stories to tell!

But each and every one of the hotel guests are given the same royal treatment which has made this hotel a favourite destination for many people time and time again.

Overlooking Bantry Bay the hotel has a rare combination of charm, comfort and location. Its food offering is another strong attraction. The Garnish Restaurant is run by the renowned chef, Eddie Attwell. Eddie finds the best local suppliers to deliver high quality food daily. Growing his own and sourcing fresh and local produce, Eddie ensures that any dish that passes through his kitchen is of the highest quality.

The hotel's luxury spa is another huge attraction.

With three treatment rooms, a deluxe double treatment suite overlooking Bantry Bay and the ultimate selection of Voya organic Irish seaweed based therapies and experiences, it's a major addition to the business.

A dedicated team of 50 staff is managed by general manager David Manning who works tirelessly to ensure that guest experience is al-



David Manning, Manager, Eccles Hotel & Spa.

(Photos: Andy Gibson & Emma Jervis)

ways and consistently to the highest standard.

'We get wonderful feedback from our guests in many ways – from social media, on review sites, via email, cards, and letters,' said Edel Whitney, marketing account manager.

'A recent review on our Tripadvisor read: "We have just returned from a family break in Eccles and it was excep-

tional. From the moment we arrived the friendly team took great care of us and delivered amazing service. The food was delicious from breakfast, sunny lunches on the rooftop terrace, and evening meals. Every member of staff we encountered had a smile and time to exchange some chat with the kids which made their time at Eccles all the more special".'





Credit Union House,  
Main Street, Skibbereen.



# Keep it local, support local.

ACCESS Credit Union are delighted and proud to once again sponsor this year's West Cork Young Businessperson of the Year award. This award category recognises and supports the creativity and dynamism of young business people under the age of 35 in our West Cork community. The quality and variety of entrepreneurship in West Cork can be seen in our local towns, with many successful startups and numerous established businesses spread around our region. We are especially renowned for our artisan food ranges, using local produce which are much sought after at home and abroad. Top this up with the wide variety of tourism and agriculture led initiatives in the area and you can really see how successful our business community is. It is great for our local businesses to have such a showcase

event as the West Cork Business & Tourism Awards to promote their products and services. 'We are delighted to be involved with this awards event again, and excited to sponsor the West Cork Young Businessperson of the Year Award' said Tony Hughes, CEO of Access Credit Union. 'We are big believers in the strength of our community, in supporting local and shopping local. It is important to support and recognise the contributions of entrepreneurs to our West Cork economy. The quality of our local entrepreneurs is clearly evident when you look around the room at this event every year.' Access Credit Union has three branches in Skibbereen Bandon and Schull that service the West Cork area. We employ local people to support local members and businesses. Their range of business loans

**'all decisions are made locally so we can factor in our local knowledge to the benefit of the applicant.'**

are tailored to meet the needs of their members to help them develop, grow and success in their ventures. Access Credit Union offers very competitive lending interest rates along with flexible repayment options to match the needs of the business cashflow. They are also providers of loans under the various SBCI Credit Guarantee Schemes supported by The Dept of Enterprise, Trade & Employment to give access to low-cost finance for businesses impacted by increased supply and energy costs. Cultivate Farm Finance is also available at Access Credit Union. These loans are tailored

to the farming community in order to help with stocking, new equipment and more recently with additional land purchases. One of the key benefits of borrowing from Access Credit Union is, according to Karen Farr, Lending Manager, is that 'all decisions are made locally so we can factor in our local knowledge to the benefit of the applicant.' By choosing to take a business loan from Access Credit Union, businesses in West Cork can not only invest in their own success but also support the local economy and contribute to its growth and sustainability.

For more information on their business and farm loans, please visit [www.accesscu.ie](http://www.accesscu.ie) or call them on (028) 21883 today. And for all the young en-

trepreneurs, who entered the West Cork Young Businessperson of the Year award, the very best of luck from all at Access Credit Union.







## Young Businessperson Of The Year – Sponsored by Access Credit Union

### Jack Regan, Trend 7 Media

## Strategic social media

TREND 7 Media is a marketing agency focused on delivering social media and online podcasting services to its clients.

Founder Jack Regan from Ballydehob set the business up as a way of providing value to local West Cork businesses.

'We help brands understand their target audience online and implement social media and podcast marketing strategies that will provide value to their audience and bring value to their own business,' the MTU graduate explained.

Trend 7 Media develops a bespoke social media and podcast marketing strategy, and also implements the strategy, creating content and uploading it to social media platforms.

In other words, he said, they allow business owners keep doing what they love, and 'we can do what we love.'

Social media and online communication change over time, he said, however Trend 7 Media 'will be there at the cutting edge of latest developments to deliver for our clients based on the changing media landscape. Always staying informed and acting quickly to new changes in the online space for our clients.'

Jack said he's committed to growing the business and has over 20 clients globally. He's hoping to hire two freelancers shortly to expand.

'I began Trend 7 Media as a way of providing value to local West Cork businesses and will be forever grateful to my early clients who took a chance on me in the Ballydehob, Skibbereen



Jack Regan of Trend 7 Media.

and Schull area.

'I have been fortunate to work with many brilliant clients and meet exceptional people who have provided me with numerous opportunities. The Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen has also been a huge help to me on my journey with Trend 7, providing me with opportunities to attend events, speak at events and engage and work on projects with them and their team.'

His ambition is to be best digital media agency in the world – scaled from Ballydehob.

### Olwyn Hanley, Ol Over It Creative

## Creative, effective branding

WHEN Olwyn Hanley couldn't find a suitable role in the workforce after graduating, she took it upon herself to create one—and it's her dream job that fulfils and excites her every day.

The pandemic put her hope for Australia on pause and compelled her to seek a creative outlet during the lockdown and in less than three years it has evolved into a successful business with a team of three female founders.

From Castletownbere, she set up Ol Over It Creative, a brand agency that specialises in the creation of authentic brands for ambitious businesses through strategic and intentional design.

She has collaborated with businesses across sectors including technology, hospitality, healthcare, education, and lifestyle. However, her particular affinity lies with passion-driven and purposeful brands that make a significant impact.

Additionally, Olwyn offers ongoing brand consulting services to support businesses in their quest to make a significant impact, offering insights and helping to develop creative marketing strategies to enhance sales and foster continued brand expansion.

Her latest venture is creative business coaching, driven by a mission to empower designers and creatives to help break free from traditional 9-5 jobs and build lives centred around their passions. Her ultimate mission is to make a continuous positive impact on creatives' lives by helping them build businesses



Olwyn Hanley of Ol Over It Creative.

that bring not only financial success but also genuine happiness and a foundation for positive, fulfilling lives 'My journey has served as an inspiration for numerous talented creatives who have embarked on their entrepreneurial paths and side hustles following my lead. In an industry often undervalued, with creatives frequently advised to relegate their passions to mere hobbies, I am here to demonstrate that there has never been a better time to be a creative professional or entrepreneur,' she said.

### Shannon Bennett, Smooth Beauty Group

## Cutting-edge beauty service

DRIVE and determination, with strong business acumen, is how members of the Smooth Beauty Group describe its founder Shannon Bennett.

Starting out back in 2017, Shannon launched the business from a single treatment room in Dunmanway. By 2019 she was ready to expand to a larger premises in the town and employ three other staff and by 2021 she opened up in Skibbereen taking on four more staff.

Fuelled by her desire to offer West Cork people the best in skin-care and beauty innovation, the latest Smooth Beauty in the chain has opened in Bantry – that's all in just five years.

The business covers every facet of the beauty industry, with a wide range of treatments on offer from eyelash extensions, nails, and tanning to laser hair removal, pigmentation removal and radio frequency micro-needling.

'Our mission is to help clients with any cosmetic services that they require, helping them become their best version of themselves. We have invested heavily in providing up-to-date cutting-edge services for our clients, so that it is no longer necessary to travel to the city for specialised skin procedures.

'Our 10 staff are constantly training and upskilling to stay up to date with current trends,' said Shannon, a mum-of-four.

An advanced skin care and laser clinic is the focus in Bantry, designed to complement the



Shannon Bennett, Smooth Beauty Group.

services offered in her other salons in Skibbereen and Dunmanway.

'Our Bantry clinic will focus on skin health and more of the technical aspects of skin rejuvenation, along with the increasingly popular laser hair removal. We are really passionate about making unique skin care and treatments more accessible to the women and men of West Cork,' she added.

'Ambition and passion are what have driven me to grow the business and never give up.'

### Cian Minihane, CM Fitness & Personal Training

## From strength to strength

CIAN Minihane set up his fitness and personal training business, five years ago, shortly after turning 23 years of age.

Since then, he said it's gone from strength to strength, successfully navigating major challenges namely the Covid pandemic, and evolving to come out the other side more robust than ever.

'We adapted, when Covid hit and left us, and others in the sector, totally in limbo, with in-person training gone. But we reacted straight away and developed a hybrid programme, and as a result we managed to maintain all our staff, as well as all our clients,' said Cian, whose business operates from the Glasslyn Rd in Bandon.

Pivoting the business, he invested in software which now allows him and the team to further their reach, and they now have clients all over Ireland, the UK, Switzerland, Australia and Saudi Arabia.

'We've now built an incredible community of clients and are now looking for a bigger facility to take on more clients and more staff,' said Cian who currently employs a team of three.

At the moment CM Fitness & Personal Training has 150 clients and Cian's ambition is to double that. He also has ambitions to expand into coaching trainers with a bid to improve standards in the industry, and to work with secondary schools. His motivation is to help busy people 'change their lives from not prioritising their



Cian Minihane of CM Fitness & Personal Training. (Photos: Andy Gibson)

health both mentally and physically to regaining their confidence in themselves and their bodies.' And he's adamant that doesn't have to mean misery. 'You can eat bread!' he said.





# The Pitch Night



Sharon Huggard, Style & Body Confidence Coach and Gemma Kingston, The Family Edit. Right: Carol Deasy of Occupational Health Solutions makes her pitch to the judges. (Photos: Andy Gibson)



Clockwise from above: Olwyn Hanley, OI Over It Creative and Aisling Vaughan, Ayrie at the event. Paula McGovern of Wizard & Grace makes her pitch to the judges. Shannon Bennett and Pamela Barry of Smooth Beauty Group. A big crowd attended the event.







# The Pitch Night



Left: The judges listen intently to a pitch. Below: The first pitch of the night was made by Michael O'Neill and Anne Cullinane of the Fernhill House Hotel.



**Who will win the special award for best pitch?**  
Find out at the gala luncheon on February 2<sup>nd</sup>!

## A look back at the 2022 West Cork Business & Tourism Awards



Last year's overall West Cork Business of the Year award was won by Global Shares. Pictured are Seán Mahon, MD The Southern Star; Aisling Riordan, Global Shares and James Fogarty, deputy chief executive, Cork County Council.



## West Cork Business Ambassador 2023 – sponsored by The Southern Star

**EUGENE SCALLY – SCALLY'S SUPERVALU, CLONAKILTY**

# 'Don't be afraid to work hard and get stuck in!'

BY EMMA CONNOLLY

EUGENE Scally took a chance when he moved from Kilbeggan, Co Westmeath to Clonakilty in 1984, in his early 20s, to open what is now the town's SuperValu.

Suffice to say, 40 years later and with countless awards under the team's belt, it was a chance that has paid dividends for him, his team, and all those he brought along with him on the journey.

The supermarket is famed nationally and internationally for its emphasis on fresh, organic and local produce which is something Eugene never had to learn, having grown up this way.

One of nine children, he was reared on a mixed farm in Kilbeggan, Co Westmeath and the family produced potatoes, barley, supplied shops with their chickens, turkeys and butter, while also keeping sheep and pigs.

'So, I always had a passion for great food and I knew that it was something I wanted to get into and to develop,' he said.

After his Leaving Cert in the early 70s he headed to Dublin for his first job in a Five Star supermarket.

His first role was burning boxes 'out the back', but Eugene climbed the ladder and was promoted to the meat counter within a year, and when he was just 19 he was already assistant manager.

It was here, he said, that he learned the importance of banter with both customers and colleagues, and work ethic, things that have stood to him over his four decades in retail.

The supermarket was later sold to Quinns-worth, and a redundancy package allowed him to purchase a small shop in Tullamore in the early 80s, with his brother.

At this stage Eugene had gained a reputation as a bit of a force to be reckoned with in retail circles. His move to West Cork came after a phone call from neighbour Seamus Scally (no relation), who worked in Musgraves at the time. He invited Eugene to Clonakilty to see a site, with a view to developing a supermarket.

He didn't even know where Clonakilty was – he thought it was a suburb of Cork like Ballincollig or Bishopstown – but straight away liked what he saw.

The site was a derelict garage, which Musgraves purchased, and which Eugene and his older brother Gerard then bought from them, opening the store in 1984.

This year is Eugene's 40th year in business, you could say the rest is history. But none of Eugene's success was accidental, and a lot of it came down to hard graft.

He routinely worked 100 hours, seven days a week, collecting fruit and veg in Cork city at 4am and being back on the shop floor by 8am.

He also recalls a trip to Boston to see Roches supermarket, run by two brothers from the Old



(Photo: Andy Gibson)

Head in Kinsale, as a turning point in how they operated.

His wife Catriona's aunt, a nun based in Boston had encouraged him to make the journey to see the set-up.

He did, and was blown away by their in-store kitchens, displays and fresh food etc, and he decided the best way to share his vision with his team was to take 12 of them back out to Roches in 1999.

'The team I brought out delivered in spades, and a lot of them are still with us,' he said.

Team is a word used a lot by Eugene as he abhors any reference to staff.

'Staff is a cheap word, I prefer team. Being part of a team brings quality to what you do, and the most important part of the business is the team around you,' he said.

He feels that your team is your strongest point and employs 133 team members.

'You have to be able to see around corners and drive the business on, and that comes down to the team and it's why people being respected in the business is so important to achieve that,' he said.

Eugene said he never wanted to be known as the 'man of the business,' but just another team member.

'I like to be stuck in the middle, on the floor, in the canteen. I could go into the deli, I might pack mince with the butchers, pack chickens on a shelf, slice cooked meat. I like being stuck in the middle of the work environment,' he said.

Eugene has long since been a proud promoter of local produce, and is credited with giving many local growers/producers their first start in the industry.

'Look after the community and they'll look after you,' he said.

Eugene has also been a visionary in other areas. The shop is the country's first autism-friendly SuperValu (Clon is the country's first autism-friendly town), which has been rolled out across the SuperValu network by Musgraves.

He was also ahead of the curve when it came to producing gluten-free products, prompted by a customer who was looking for a birthday cake for her son. It's typical of his 'can-do' attitude.

His second-eldest child Niamh is now at the helm of Clonakilty Gluten Free Kitchen, making

a name for herself in her own right in the retail industry.

Outside of SuperValu Eugene was involved in developing the Quality Hotel, now the Clonakilty Park Hotel, with others, recognising the potential for the town as a tourist destination. Starting with building a pool and 28 bedrooms, it's now a 102-bedroom hotel with a leisure and adventure centre.

The GAA played a big part in his life since moving to Clonakilty, from playing himself (getting to a county final in 1985), to being involved in teams as a manager and also as a sponsor. The GAA played a big role in helping him integrate in the community.

Eugene has been heavily involved in Tidy Towns over the years, culminating in his role as chairperson of Rathbarry Tidy Towns which was Ireland's Tidiest Village in 1999.

Married to Caitriona, they're parents of four. As well as Niamh, Eoghan manages the Clonakilty supermarket; Martin is travelling and Fiona is training to be a solicitor.

Retail is in the family DNA. Eugene's brother Gerard returned to Maynooth where he operated his own Centra store until recently. Tom, his younger brother, also started off in Clonakilty with Eugene before moving to Cork where he now runs his own successful SuperValu store in Blackrock. Aidan Scally, Eugene's cousin also came from Co Offaly to work in Clonakilty and also branched out to run his own Centra store at the other end of town until recently.

His top business advice?

'Don't be afraid to work hard and get stuck in!' he said, adding that you don't have to be a college student to be a successful person in business.

'There is a huge shortage of skills in every aspect of life, in our case butchers, bakers and deli professionals. If young people could start learning the trades, there are businesses to be built and the potential for great success,' he added.

Eugene said he is very humbled to have his time in business in West Cork recognised with this award.

'It is poignant that it comes at the beginning of our 40th year in business in Clonakilty and at a time when the family are now becoming more involved in the business and expanding their horizons. It's nostalgic looking back and thinking about all the people who have helped him make it all possible,' he said.

Reflecting on the anniversary he says he's 'very happy' with his lot and his life.

'I've a great life, family, and great team of people. I couldn't ask for any more,' he said.

At the age of 66, he said he's winding down – just a little.

'I've got free bus travel and I plan to use it! Something tells us he'll always be looking around corners, to see what's coming up next!