

ISSUE 62

MAY 2026

FREE MAGAZINE

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## EDITORIAL

**W**elcome to the Spring Edition of Little Village. The release of Ireland's 1926 Census, a century later, (2026) is fascinating with the amount of detail contained in it. Have a look at our article on "Census 1926" and see for yourself the great value of its release.

An article on "The Quiet Shame of the Robot Lawn Mower" was submitted to us by one of our readers. We, at Little Village, found it funny, witty and enjoyable, and so have decided to publish it for your enjoyment too.

Finally, "Will It Ever Stop Raining in Ireland This Year" is a good read on our famous topic of discussion – The Irish Weather!!!! After reading it, you will see that 2026 is not proving to be the wettest imaginable year in Dublin and Kildare. There has, in fact, been worse individual months in recent years.

So, on that note, we will take our leave and wish you all a very enjoyable Spring.

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**Ronan Bright**  
: Director / Head of Sales  
: bightronan83@gmail.com  
: 085 199 8321



**Patrick Browne**  
: Graphic Design  
: hello@patrickbrowndesign.com  
: 086 831 9322

### LITTLE VILLAGE MAGAZINE

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# MORE THAN A TREMOR

## Why We Need to Talk More About Parkinson's in Ireland



**T**here are some illnesses we think we understand because we recognise the name. Parkinson's is one of them. Most people, if asked, would picture a trembling hand, a slightly stooped walk, a familiar public image of old age and frailty. But Parkinson's is far more complex than that, and far more present in Irish life than many of us realise. In Ireland, about 18,000 people are living with Parkinson's, and that number is expected to rise in the years ahead.

What makes Parkinson's difficult is not just the condition itself, but the way it can arrive quietly. It often does not begin with one dramatic symptom. It can start with stiffness, slower movement, disturbed sleep, constipation, changes in speech, low mood or a fading sense of smell. Yes, tremor can be part of it, but it is not the whole story, and for some people it is not even the first story. Parkinson's is a progressive neurological condition that affects movement, balance and co-ordination, but it can also affect confidence, energy, communication and everyday ease in ways that are much less visible from the outside.

That matters because people are very good at explaining things away. We tell ourselves we are tired, getting older, a bit run down, not sleeping properly, under pressure. Families do it too. A hand is shaky, but maybe it is stress. A walk is slower, but maybe it is just age. A voice is quieter, handwriting smaller, face less expressive — all easy enough to dismiss when life is busy and nobody wants to make a fuss. But awareness is often the difference between struggling in silence and getting help sooner. Persistent symptoms that affect movement, balance or day-to-day function are worth bringing to a GP. Parkinson's is not “just part of ageing.”

One of the hard truths about Parkinson's is that diagnosis is not always neat or immediate. There is no single conclusive test. Doctors usually diagnose it through symptoms, medical history and physical examination, sometimes using tests to rule out other conditions. That uncertainty can be unsettling. It can leave people feeling caught in a strange in-between: not well, not sure, and trying to carry on as normal while something clearly is not quite right.

And yet, a diagnosis is not the end of life as people know it. That is one of the most important things to say out loud. Parkinson's is serious, but many people continue to live active, meaningful, engaged lives for years after diagnosis. Medication can help manage symptoms. Physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and regular exercise can all play a

major role in helping people stay mobile, independent and connected to the world around them. Support is not only about treatment. It is about helping someone keep living their own life in their own way.

There is also a practical side that deserves more attention in Ireland. Parkinsonism is covered under the HSE Long-Term Illness Scheme, which means approved medicines and appliances can be provided without a means test. For families already dealing with appointments, transport, fatigue and the general drain of long-term illness, that kind of support can make a real difference. It may not remove the burden, but it can soften it.

Still, the part of Parkinson's that often goes unseen is the emotional cost. The outside world may notice a tremor or a slower step, but not the private calculations that come with it: the hesitation before going out, the worry about falling, the embarrassment when words do not come clearly, the frustration of taking longer to do simple things, the tiredness of having to think about what used to happen naturally. Illness changes more than a body. It changes the rhythm of a day, the confidence with which someone enters a room, the ease of saying yes to plans.

That is why awareness has to go beyond symptoms and leaflets. It has to include compassion. It has to include patience. It has to include the ordinary decency of understanding that someone living with Parkinson's may look fine one hour and completely depleted the next. Not every struggle is visible. Not every effort announces itself.

In Ireland, organisations such as Parkinson's Ireland provide information, support and local services for people living with the condition and for their families and care partners. That kind of community support matters enormously, because illness can be isolating, and isolation makes everything harder. A good support network, a knowledgeable nurse, an exercise group, a local contact who understands — these things may sound small on paper, but in real life they can be the difference between coping and not coping.

Perhaps that is the real point of a health awareness article. Not simply to list symptoms, but to widen the picture. Parkinson's is not just a shaking hand. It is not a shorthand for old age. It is a complex condition that touches movement, mood, sleep, speech and identity. And in Ireland, it touches thousands of homes.

The more we understand that, the better chance we have of recognising it earlier, responding to it better, and meeting people with something more useful than pity. We can meet them with awareness, support and respect — which, in the end, is what every serious illness deserves.

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# CASTLEKNOCK'S QUIET REVOLUTION

Why an Age-Friendly Walking Loop Matters More Than It Sounds

**N**ot every good local idea arrives with fanfare. Some do not involve cranes, ribbon-cutting grandstanding or the promise of artisan coffee. Some are much quieter than that. In Castleknock, one of the more interesting local developments this year is also one of the simplest: Fingal County Council has launched its first age-friendly walking loop, just off Auburn Avenue, in partnership with Castleknock Tidy Towns. It is marked at each entrance and designed specifically to make walking easier, safer and more welcoming for older people.

At first glance, that may not sound like the sort of thing to set pulses racing. A walking loop? Is that it? But perhaps that is exactly the point. The best changes to how we live are often not dramatic. They are practical. They make ordinary days a little better. They let people do everyday things with more confidence. They say something important about what a place values.

Dublin 15 has never been short on energy. It is full of schools, shops, estates, sports clubs, traffic, errands, people rushing somewhere, and all the business of modern suburban life. But one of the questions every growing area has to ask itself is this: who is all this growth actually for? If a place works only for the young, the fast, the mobile and the permanently in a hurry, then it does not quite work at all.

That is why the Castleknock loop feels more significant than it may first appear. Fingal describes an age-friendly walking loop as one that supports active, independent and socially connected living. The route signage tells people about basics that matter more than planners sometimes realise: distance, surface type and facilities. The design principles are even more telling. The council says these loops are meant to offer even and step-free access, good lighting and sightlines, regular rest points where possible, clear wayfinding, and a setting that encourages both physical activity and social connection.

In plain English, it means somebody actually thought about what can stop a person from going for a walk.

That matters. Because for many older people, the barrier is not laziness, and it is not a lack of good intentions. It can be uncertainty. Is the path even? Is there somewhere to sit if I get tired? Will I have to cross a road that feels like

taking my life in my hands? Will I meet anybody, or will I feel a bit stranded? Walking is often presented as the easiest thing in the world, but for plenty of people it stops being easy long before it stops being important.

And walking is important, not just in the pious, leaflet-distribution sense. It matters because it gives shape to a day. It provides rhythm, contact, routine and a reason to leave the house. A decent local walk can be exercise, company, therapy and a small declaration of independence all rolled into one. The loss of that, especially later in life, is

*Continues P.8*

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not minor. It shrinks the world.

There is another reason this matters in Castleknock and across Dublin 15. Fingal's new Age Friendly Strategy says that 21 per cent of the county's population is now aged 55 and over, and that share is continuing to grow. The strategy is built around four themes: health and wellbeing, mobility and accessibility, safe and attractive neighbourhoods, and information and participation. The Auburn Avenue loop is, in effect, those priorities made visible on the ground rather than left sitting in a document on a shelf.

That is what makes this more than a nice gesture. It is part of a bigger test for suburban Dublin. Can communities that were often designed around cars become places where people can comfortably age? Can they remain local in the best sense of the word: walkable, recognisable, human in scale, and not just a sequence of roundabouts linking supermarkets to housing estates? Can a person in later life still feel that the neighbourhood belongs to them, and not just to school-run traffic and people in activewear power-walking with podcasts?

Castleknock is, in many ways, well placed for this conversation. It has community pride, established neighbourhoods and a strong sense of place. It also sits within a wider push to make the area easier and safer to navigate on foot and by bike. Fingal's Auburn Avenue to 12th Lock project aims to link residents to shops, schools, sports facilities and the Royal Canal with segregated walking and cycling infrastructure, upgraded crossings and a more inclusive route design. On paper, at least, that points towards a version of suburban life that is not entirely dependent on the car and is friendlier to children, older adults and anyone who would simply like to cross the road

without a small act of spiritual preparation.

Of course, one walking loop will not solve everything. It will not cure loneliness, fix transport, or magically turn every footpath in Dublin 15 into a model of accessibility. But good local design is rarely about magic. It is about signals. It tells residents, quietly but clearly, "You were thought about." For older people, that message can be far more powerful than public bodies sometimes realise.

There is also something refreshing about the modesty of it. In an age when every civic improvement is announced as transformational, disruptive or world-class, an age-friendly walking loop is pleasingly unflashy. It does not pretend to be the Barcelona waterfront. It simply tries to make a local walk pleasant, legible and safe. That may not win many awards for glamorous urban theatre, but it might do something better: make everyday life easier for the people actually living there.

And perhaps that is where Dublin 15 is heading, or should be. Not just towards more homes, more roads, more development and more pressure, but towards a better idea of what a mature community looks like. One where ageing is not treated as an inconvenience to be managed but as an ordinary stage of life worth designing for.

So yes, it is only a walking loop. But "only" can be a misleading word. Sometimes a bench, a clear sign, a safe surface and a familiar route are not small things at all. Sometimes they are the difference between staying in and stepping out. And any neighbourhood that helps more people step out into the world with confidence is doing something very right.



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# Clonsilla's Next Chapter - Can a Growing Place Still Feel Like a Village?



## CLONSILLA FRAMEWORK PLAN

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Draft Framework Plan for Clonsilla.

**T**here are parts of Dublin 15 that feel as though they know exactly what they are. Clonsilla is not one of them, and that is not an insult. It is what makes the place interesting. Clonsilla has one foot in the old idea of village life and the other in the modern reality of a fast-growing suburb. It is not fully one thing or the other. That in-between quality gives it charm, but it also creates tension. Every change feels personal here. A new path is not just a path. A new building is not just a building. It is part of a larger argument about what Clonsilla is becoming.

That is why the Clonsilla Framework Plan matters more than the average planning document ever should. Fingal says the plan is intended to guide future development so that Clonsilla becomes a “vibrant and distinct” place with community at its core, with public realm upgrades, better recreation, improved accessibility and stronger active travel links all central to the vision. The underlying aims are to improve the urban fabric, create a more liveable core, make the

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area easier to move through and provide for new civic and social activity.

On paper, that all sounds sensible, and much of it is. Most people are not against safer walking routes, a nicer village centre, better public spaces or easier access to shops, schools and the train station. The problem is not usually the ambition. It is trust. When people hear words like “framework”, “improvement” and “regeneration”, they often wonder what is really being proposed underneath the pleasant language. Will it make daily life better, or just busier? Will it strengthen Clonsilla’s identity, or flatten it into another generic piece of outer Dublin?

That local sensitivity was obvious in the response to the plan. Fingal’s consultation on the Draft Clonsilla Framework Plan ran from 15 January to 14 February 2025 and drew 336 submissions. That number does not, by itself, tell you whether people were supportive, critical or split down the middle. But it does tell you this: Clonsilla is not a place where residents are shrugging and leaving decisions to someone else. People care deeply about what happens next.

And there is more than one layer to that “next chapter”. In mid-2025, Fingal also opened consultation on the Old School House Masterplan for Clonsilla. That proposal is not just about housing land. It also centres on restoring and reusing the Old School House building and linking the site into the Royal Canal Urban Greenway. That consultation, which ran from 30 June to 11 August 2025, attracted 277 submissions, again showing a level of local engagement you do not get unless people feel the stakes are real.

This is where the Clonsilla story becomes more interesting than a standard development row. The real issue is not whether the area should change. It already is changing, and anyone pretending otherwise is only fooling themselves. The issue is whether Clonsilla can absorb change without losing the characteristics people value most: recognisable streets, some sense of centre, a bit of breathing room, local memory, and the feeling that you live somewhere with a personality rather than in a transport corridor with houses attached.

That pressure is only increasing. In April 2026, Fingal approved a variation to its Development Plan aimed at facilitating 5,000 additional homes across the county, with Clonsilla listed among the locations identified for further housing growth alongside places such as Barnhill, Skerries and Kinsealy. Fingal’s argument is that these are places capable of supporting compact, well-connected development near public transport and existing infrastructure. That may be true in policy terms, but in lived terms it means areas like Clonsilla are being asked to carry a larger share of Dublin’s future.

That is why the village question matters. Plenty of places talk about “placemaking”, but residents usually ask a much simpler thing: will this still feel like Clonsilla when you are finished? A village centre is not created by sticking nicer paving stones on the ground and calling it a destination. It needs a reason for people to linger. It needs routes that feel safe to walk. It needs a few social spaces that are not entirely commercial. It needs heritage to be treated as something more than an awkward obstacle standing in the way of a site plan. To Fingal’s credit, the official language around Clonsilla does at least recognise many of those points, with references to distinct identity, public realm, community facilities, active travel, heritage and quality of life.

Still, official language is the easy part. Delivery is the harder test. If Clonsilla ends up with better links, smarter public space, a respected village core and genuine reuse of older landmarks, people may look back on this period as the moment the place finally grew into itself. If, on the other hand, growth feels piecemeal, traffic-heavy and indifferent to local character, then every promise about vibrancy and sustainability will sound like the usual brochure talk.

For now, Clonsilla stands at an awkward but fascinating point in its history. It is no longer simply the quieter edge of somewhere else, but it is not yet fully confident in its own centre either. That is what makes the story worth telling. The next chapter is not really about planning drawings or consultation documents. It is about whether a place can modernise without becoming bland. In Dublin 15, that is not a small question. In Clonsilla, it may be the question.

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Councillor

# John Walsh

Phone: 087 6486228 Email: john.walsh@cllrs.fingal.ie  cllrjohnwalsh

*Dear Resident*

I hope you are keeping well. I have included an update on issues which I have been working on. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if I can be of any assistance.

All the best, *John*

## **BLANCHARDSTOWN CENTRE – DECISION DEFERRED UNTIL JUNE**

A decision on the plan to introduce parking charges at the Blanchardstown was deferred by An Comisiun Pleanála until 17th June due to 'the complexity of the case'.

- We submitted a community petition of over 10,600 signatures to the management of the Centre in March calling for the plan to be dropped – well done to my colleague Luke Daly for starting the petition.
- I have submitted an appeal to An Comisiun Pleanála calling for the rejection of the Council decision to allow parking charges. I have also written to the management of the Centre calling on them to meet with local communities and businesses who are opposed to the charges.

The proposed charges would impose an unfair burden on workers, businesses and local communities at the height of the cost of living crisis. It is unacceptable that SVP Capital, the investment fund which owns the Centre, are willing to create financial barriers to essential public services, such as HSE Breast Check, Draíocht, Jigsaw, the Library, Post Office and Fingal Council.

## **KELLYSTOWN CEMETERY DUE FOR COMPLETION THIS SUMMER**

The completion of Kellystown cemetery has been delayed over a long period but is finally close to completion. I asked a question at a recent Area Committee to clarify when the cemetery will become operational:

**Question: Councillor J. Walsh "To ask the Chief Executive to provide an outline of when the cemetery in Kellystown will be fully operational?"**

Reply: The development of Kellystown Cemetery is ongoing following commencement of site works in Q1 2025. It is anticipated that the cemetery will be fully operational in late Quarter 2 or early Quarter 3 this year, subject to no delays with the construction works or obtaining utility connections.

This project when complete will provide approx. 650 grave plots, structures for the storage of ashes including columbarium walls and memorial plots, a small services building, a carpark and extensive site infrastructure and landscaping.

## **AUBURN AVENUE WALKING AND CYCLING SCHEME**

The Active Travel section of Fingal Council recently confirmed to me that construction of the Auburn Avenue Walking and Cycling Route will commence in the second quarter of 2026. A pre-contract meeting has taken place with the preferred contractor and construction is programmed to take up to 12 months. This work will be phased at certain locations due to traffic management requirements.



Labour



## TRAFFIC CALMING SCHEMES

The Area Committee at our meeting on 23rd April 2026 approved proposed Traffic Calming Schemes at four locations:

- Castleknock Manor/Old Navan Road, Castleknock, Dublin 15: 2 Type B Zebra Crossings (1 raised & 1 level with road) and 3 standard ramps.
- Stonebridge Road, Willow Wood, Dublin 15 - 7 standard ramps
- The Mall Ongar, Ongar, Dublin 15 - 1 raised Zebra Crossing.
- Lanesborough Road, Meakstown, Dublin 11 - 5 standard ramps.



## CLONSILLA HERITAGE GUIDE LAUNCHED

The new Clonsilla Heritage Guide was launched on 29th April in St. Mary's church and has a wealth of fascinating information about the local history, heritage and buildings of Clonsilla. Congratulations to the Clonsilla Porterstown Heritage Society for all their work and well done to Fingal Heritage office for supporting such a valuable project.

## TOWN CENTRE FIRST TO BE INTRODUCED FOR CASTLEKNOCK AND BLANCHARDSTOWN

It's very positive that **Town Centre First** will be rolled out in Castleknock and Blanchardstown later this year. I have made the case to Fingal Council for the Town Centre First initiative to be implemented in Dublin 15 following its success in Lusk and Rush.

- The Fingal Town Regeneration Office gave a commitment that Town Centre First would be introduced in Castleknock during a deputation meeting with Castleknock Tidy Towns on 22nd March. Well done to Castleknock Tidy Towns who brought this to the top of the Council's agenda over the last two years.
- Dublin 15 has lost out badly as a major suburban area – which has a greater population than Limerick city – because we qualify for none of the Government's urban renewal schemes, all aimed at rural towns and villages.
- Town Centre First is important as a gateway to securing funding for improvements in the village streetscape and urban realm. It would involve an action plan to be prepared by an inclusive, cross-community Town Team.
- The Council indicated that Town Centre First would be introduced in Castleknock and Blanchardstown in the autumn of 2026.

*Working with Cllr Mary McCamley and Luke Daly*

# CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Balbriggan and Blanchardstown Libraries to host collaborative photography exhibition between Cystic Fibrosis Ireland and photographer Trevor O'Donoghue, which aims to highlight emerging challenges of life with Cystic Fibrosis

**C**ystic Fibrosis Ireland (CFI) in collaboration with photographer and person with Cystic Fibrosis (pwCF), Trevor O'Donoghue, are proud to announce the exhibition 'The Cost of Breathing' in Balbriggan Library from 5th to the 15th of May and Blanchardstown Library from the 18th to the 22nd May.

The exhibition was launched at the CFI National Conference 2026 on the 7th February in Limerick, and embarked on a national tour which aims to highlight the societal and economic challenges that many people living with CF face, despite advancements in recent years. Having been hosted in library locations around Ireland since the launch, the exhibition now will be exhibited in these Dublin locations.

Research conducted by CFI in 2025 shows the significant financial burden many people with CF and their families regularly face. Among the findings are:

- 44.9% of pwCF struggling to meet their monthly bills
- 28.1% of pwCF are unable to work due to their CF
- 30.3% of those pwCF in full time employment experience enforced deprivation
- 63.8% of pwCF receiving Disability Allowance experience enforced deprivation

Presenting the data at the CFI National Conference, Sarah Tecklenborg, CEO CFI, commented "Our research highlighted the significant financial burden many people with CF and their families face daily. Whether they are a parent who gives up work for the caring responsibilities required to keep a child with CF well, a person with CF covering the extensive costs of multiple hospital visits each year or missing education or career opportunities due to CF, there are significant lifelong financial stresses associated with CF"

Cystic Fibrosis Ireland are highlighting the enforced deprivation and emerging challenges for people with Cystic Fibrosis, despite the improvement in life experience and expectancy in recent years.

Trevor O'Donoghue, photographer and life coach (Radharc Perspective & Life Coaching), is a person with CF. He became involved in the project to strengthen awareness of the realities of living with the condition, which is sometimes referred to as a hidden disability/illness.

"Ireland is no stranger to the story of CF. The journey from being a childhood illness to the positivity that we see now, has been paved with many great advocacy and awareness initiatives. However, this exhibition tells an untold part of that story and asks what it feels like to survive in a system where everything has a cost, even the breath in your lungs," O'Donoghue explains.

"I created seven pieces which were first shown at the online exhibition in October. Each one is embedded in a different emotion, illustrated with a different colour and highlights the very real issues of life with CF. These are based on first-hand, lived experiences, but also second and



third hand experiences, through discussions with my partner, who also lives with an illness, and others in the CF community in Ireland."

Tecklenborg continues, "We are incredibly proud to be working with Trevor. 'The Cost of Breathing' is not a comfortable story, but it is one told with hope. Trevor confronts the pervasiveness of social and economic poverty yet shares the positivity of his story. Libraries are a wonderful public amenity, and we would like to thank Balbriggan and Blanchardstown Libraries for featuring the exhibition. We invite everyone to visit the exhibition and join us on the journey to highlight and address these uneasy truths."

The exhibition will be available for public viewing in multiple locations around Ireland until June 2026. To ensure the exhibition is fully accessible, a virtual gallery was launched online in October 2025 and is available at <https://www.cfireland.ie/support-resources/members-events/the-cost-of-breathing>.

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# FINGAL LAGGING BEHIND AS BUS SHELTER NUMBERS COLLAPSE - O'GORMAN

New Figures provided to Deputy Roderic O’Gorman through a parliamentary question show that only 8 bus shelters have been built in Fingal since 2018, with 0 built so far in 2026. This is in comparison to 106 built in Dublin City and 40 built in South Dublin in the same timespan.

The responsibility for the installation of bus shelters lies with the National Transport Authority, with each shelter requiring planning permission before being installed.

The number of bus shelters built in Fingal since 2018, according to information provided to Deputy Roderic O’Gorman from the National Transport Authority on foot of a parliamentary question:

2018: 0  
2019: 0  
2020: 0  
2021: 0  
2022: 4  
2023: 1  
2024: 1  
2025: 2  
2026: 0  
Total: 8

Addressing the new figures, Deputy O’Gorman said:

*“I have always felt the NTA needs to put a greater focus on the issue of the commuter experience - just one uncomfortable journey can turn somebody off using public transport, and getting drenched on a rainy day waiting for a bus that might be running late is a far too common*



Roderic O’Gorman TD standing at a bus stop in Hollystown, D15 with no bus shelter.

*experience. Having adequate shelter from the rain is not too much to ask for”.*

“The numbers coming out of Fingal happen at the same time of a total collapse in bus shelters being installed nationally in 2025 - in that year just 3 were installed in all of County Dublin, and 14 counties did not build even one shelter” O’Gorman stated.

Reflecting on the Government’s current transport priority Deputy O’Gorman noted:

*“The government has put the parking brake on for numerous planned public transport improvements - most of which were planned by the Greens in Government. We are seeing various phases of BusConnects being delayed, DART South West and Luas Finglas pushed back to the end of the decade, and just a general deprioritisation of public transport, just when commuters need it the most”.*

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# What Happened to Owning a Proper Dog?

When did man's best friend become a fashion accessory? More by Grumpy man

**T**here was a time in Ireland when a dog was a proper dog. A solid animal. A creature with mud on its paws, a suspicious interest in slurry, and a working knowledge of every ditch, field and puddle within a three-mile radius. A dog had weight. Presence. A bark that made the postman re-evaluate his life choices.

Now we have dogs that look like they'd blow away if you opened a window too quickly.

Somewhere along the line, the national understanding of "getting a dog" seems to have shifted from "a loyal companion who will tear around the garden like a mad thing" to "a nervous little luxury item with eyes like wet buttons and a wardrobe budget larger than any man". Increasingly, the modern aspirational pet is not a dog so much as a trembling side dish. Something beige and expensive that fits into a handbag and reacts to ordinary life as if it has just heard dreadful news from the stock market.

You see them everywhere now. Tiny dogs with names like Hugo, Coco or Princess, being carried through farmers' markets as though their wee paws have never known the indignity of touching pavement. They have coats for rain, coats for winter, coats for "transitional weather", and in some cases, social media accounts. Their owners speak of them the way previous generations spoke of prize racehorses. "He only eats hand-reared chicken." "She won't walk on gravel." "He has separation anxiety if I leave the room to make tea."

At this point one is tempted to ask: is it a dog, or is it a chronic invalid?

Of course, there is nothing wrong with small dogs in themselves. Many of them are full of character. Fair play to them. Most are trying their best. The issue is not size. The issue is attitude and not always the dog's. There has been a cultural rebrand. Dogs used to be allowed to be dogs. Now many are curated, accessorised, and managed like furry influencers. They are shampooed, fluffed, photographed and ferried about as if the whole point of canine existence is to coordinate with a cashmere throw.

And let us be honest: some of these so-called luxury breeds do not exactly radiate ruggedness. They look permanently astonished, like minor aristocrats who have just discovered the hotel has run out of sparkling water. They are less "faithful hound" and more "nervous brunch companion".

Compare that to the proper Irish dog of old. The family collie who rounded up children as effectively as sheep. The Irish terrier who feared nothing, including tractors. The Labrador who came home filthy, ecstatic and carrying something that definitely did not belong to him. These were dogs with a sense of purpose. Dogs who could cope with weather, terrain, noise, and reality. Dogs who did not require a padded carrier and hypoallergenic paw balm.

Perhaps that is what people are really nostalgic for: not just bigger dogs, but dogs that seemed gloriously unbothered by modern fuss. A proper dog didn't need an Instagram account. It



needed a stick, a field, and the chance to gallop at top speed for no reason whatsoever.

Still, before we get too smug, it is worth remembering that every generation makes a show of itself in different ways. Once upon a time the height of pet indulgence was slipping scraps under the table. Now it is birthday cakes made from dog friendly ingredients and a monogrammed lead. Progress, of a sort.

And maybe the truth is this: whether it weighs three stone or three pounds, whether it sleeps in a kennel or on an orthopaedic cushion imported from Milan, every dog remains, underneath it all, wonderfully doggish. Even the handbag variety. Give them half a chance and many would gladly swap the designer carrier for a good hedge and something disgusting to roll in.

Which is heartening. It suggests that the proper dog has not vanished entirely. He is still in there, somewhere beneath the bows, the blow-dries and the tiny, quilted jacket.

He is simply waiting for someone to put him down on the ground and let him get mucky.

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# Roderic O'GORMAN TD

## A Chairde,

Below I share some of the latest updates on issues I have been working on in the constituency. Further info and updates are shared on my website and on my social media.

### A Night Bus for Blanchardstown Village



The expansion of 24-hour bus services in Dublin in recent years has been a game changer - giving people more routes home and saving them money.

I think a simple diversion of the 39A night time services through Blanchardstown village would allow even more people in the area to use the bus. The NTA noted the merit of such a proposal in my initial contact with them - I'll continue to work to make this a reality.



### Leading the Fight to Protect the Climate Action Act

Ireland's Climate Action Act is the central piece of law that underpins our country's ambitions to make us energy independent, deliver lower cost energy and meet our climate targets.

Unfortunately, the Government is now making a serious effort to water down the effectiveness of this law. In two draft laws - the bill to allow for the State owned LNG facility in Clare and the Dublin

Airport Passenger Cap bill - the Government has inserted specific provisions that exempt these projects from any scrutiny under our Climate Action Act. Myself and my colleagues across the Green Party will do all we can to prevent the watering down of the Climate Action Act.



At the launch of the NSPCA Strategic Plan recently with Mary Margaret - the star of the show!



### Energy Supports Must Benefit People, Not Energy Companies

There is no end in sight to the turmoil in the Middle East.

As Government rolls out its own package of supports, it is important that benefits are focused on households, and not a tax cut for energy companies.

We must also remember to focus on long term solutions, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels by investing in renewable energy, expanding retrofit supports, and improving energy efficiency standards for homes. This will allow us to weather any future energy crises more comfortably.

Please don't hesitate to get  
in touch on any issue

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# HEALTH AND WELLBEING INFO FOR D15

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- Our meeting is OPEN to anyone interested in learning about AA and how we help others affected by alcoholism.
- Alcoholics Anonymous is an international Fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem.
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# The Quiet Comeback of Ireland's Red Squirrel

There are few sights in Irish nature more cheering than the sudden flicker of a red squirrel in the trees: a flash of russet fur, a bottle-brush tail, and those faintly ridiculous ear tufts that make it look as though it has dressed for the opera.

**T**he red squirrel feels deeply native to the Irish imagination, and in fact it is a native species here, thought to have been present since before the last Ice Age. It is a woodland animal, and after catastrophic deforestation in the 16th and 17th centuries the population suffered severely; the squirrels we see today largely descend from 19th-century reintroductions.

For years, the story seemed to be heading one way only. The invasive grey squirrel, introduced in Ireland in 1911, spread widely and brought with it bad news for its smaller native cousin. Grey squirrels compete with reds for food, damage trees by bark stripping, and carry squirrel pox, which is lethal to red squirrels. Bigger, tougher and less fussy about food, they looked for a long time like the winners of the contest.

But Irish wildlife, like Irish life in general, has a habit of refusing to stick to the script. The red squirrel has made a real recovery in recent years. In the 2019 All-Ireland Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey, red squirrel records rose to 1,784, up from 1,465 in 2012, and the species was recorded in every county. The species' conservation status in Ireland improved from "Near Threatened" in 2009 to "Least Concern" in the 2019 Red List assessment. The west remains a major stronghold, but the species is also doing notably well in places such as Cork and Wicklow, and the old midlands gap in its range has shrunk to parts of Meath, Louth and Dublin.

The most intriguing twist in the story is that the red squirrel has not staged this comeback alone. Much of the credit goes to another native species: the pine marten. Research in Ireland has shown that where pine martens recover and establish healthy breeding populations, grey squirrel numbers tend to fall, allowing red squirrels to recolonise woodlands. Scientists are still working out the exact mechanics, but the broad pattern is now well established enough to be one of the most remarkable wildlife turnarounds on the island. In 2019, pine martens too were recorded in every county, and their expanding core range was linked to further grey squirrel decline.

This does not mean the job is done. The happy ending, as



ever in conservation, has an asterisk. Grey squirrels remain particularly numerous in large urban areas such as Dublin and Belfast, and researchers note that urban parks may act as a refuge for greys from pine marten predation. That means our towns and city green spaces matter hugely in the next chapter of the red squirrel story. The comeback is real, but it is not automatic, and it is not guaranteed everywhere.

There is also something rather lovely about the character of the red squirrel itself. It is not the brash, pavement-strutting opportunist of postcards from London parks. Red squirrels are shy, elusive creatures, most often seen high in the canopy, slipping around the far side of a trunk as if they would rather not make a fuss. Perhaps that is part of why people are so fond of them. Their recovery feels less like the return of a pest and more like the return of grace.

Across Ireland, that fondness is now being turned into practical work. In Killiney Hill, for example, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's restoration project includes habitat surveys, fencing to help vegetation recover, planting to improve habitat, awareness measures and continued grey squirrel management. Elsewhere, long-running survey work and local conservation groups have helped keep watch over populations and respond when pressure returns. Even the 2019 survey authors warned against assuming that because the species is doing better, it can now be left to fend for itself without further monitoring or local intervention.

And that may be the nicest part of the red squirrel's recovery in Ireland: it is not just a story about one attractive little animal. It is a story about woodland health, native species, scientific monitoring, citizen science and the slow repair of damage once thought irreversible. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has launched a new All-Ireland Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey for 2026, asking the public to record sightings, building on earlier surveys in 2007, 2012 and 2019. So, if you catch that quick red shimmer in the branches on a walk this spring or summer, it is worth a second look. You may be seeing not just a squirrel, but one of Ireland's quietest success stories.

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BLANCHARDSTOWN-MULHUDDART

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Cllr. Patrick Quinlan Secures Motion on Millennium Park Monument While Pushing Housing Priority for Irish Nationals (February – April 2026). Since 1 February 2026, Cllr. Patrick Quinlan (National Party, Blanchardstown/Mulhuddart) has actively represented local residents in Fingal County Council by raising critical issues on housing, transparency, free speech, and community amenities.

## FREE SPEECH

On 9 February 2026, Cllr. Quinlan strongly opposed a motion to restrict the use of the term “non-national” in council debates. He described it as a “targeted gag order” aimed at silencing councillors who highlight housing shortages, resource strains, and demographic pressures from mass immigration, defending the right of elected members to open and honest discussion.

## HOUSING

In March 2026, Cllr. Quinlan proposed a significant motion calling on the Council to write to Minister James Browne TD, demanding that all housing supports — including the Help to Buy Scheme, Local Government Home Loan, Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, First Home Scheme, Rent Tax Credit, HAP, RAS, Cost Rental Scheme, Affordable Purchase Homes, Tenant Purchase Scheme, and Social Housing be ring-fenced exclusively for Irish nationals. The motion received no

seconded and was met with complete silence from other councillors, underscoring what Cllr. Quinlan called a “serious lack of will” to prioritise Irish people in their own communities amid growing pressures on local services.

Throughout March and April, Cllr. Quinlan continued scrutinising housing policy. He raised questions on vacant social housing in Dublin 15, ‘affordable housing’ unit costs and sales, council rents, and the impacts of rezoning the lands at Dunsink on existing communities, infrastructure and wildlife; he also asked if the Fingal Executives have ran models to determine if this development will be occupied by a majority Irish or non-Irish group of people, valid concerns given recent trends in new developments in Dublin. The council Executives could not answer Cllr. Quinlan’s question.

He has repeatedly demanded the release of data on the nationality breakdown of social housing applicants and HAP recipients for full public transparency – the council does not record applicants based on their country of origin.

## COST-OF-LIVING

Cllr. Quinlan also submitted an emergency motion under Standing Order 79 addressing an urgent local issue that could not reasonably wait for an ordinary meeting amid rising fuel prices and fuel protests in April. Despite a clear rationale demonstrating immediacy, the motion was ruled out of order by the chair. Cllr. Quinlan publicly anticipated this outcome.

## MILLENIUM PARK

On a positive note, Cllr. Quinlan successfully brought forward a motion regarding the Millennium Park Monument in Blanchardstown. The motion was accepted and progressed, highlighting his commitment to preserving and enhancing local community landmarks and public spaces for residents.

Cllr. Quinlan has consistently positioned himself as a strong advocate for Fingal residents, and particularly his local constituents of the Blanchardstown/Mulhuddart LEA, demanding facts and figures on resource allocation rather than avoiding difficult conversations driven by rapid population growth.

***“The Irish People deserve honesty, transparency, and priority from their local authority,”***

Cllr. Patrick Quinlan remains available for comment:  
[Patrick.quinlan@cllrs.fingal.ie](mailto:Patrick.quinlan@cllrs.fingal.ie) | 087 488 9118

# Will It Ever Stop Raining in Ireland this year?

**Yes. Briefly. Just long enough for an Irish person to say, “Grand, summer’s here,” wash the car, put on lighter shoes, and be punished for hubris within 48 hours.**

**A**s of the time of writing this article, Met Éireann’s forecast for Dublin and Kildare is mainly dry with sunny spells, and the east has actually been relatively dry over the last week: Casement recorded 3.5mm, only 26% of normal for that seven-day period. So, the short answer is that it has stopped, at least for the moment. The longer answer is that 2026 has already done enough rain in the opening months to leave people in Dublin 15 emotionally waterlogged.

To keep this honest, the cleanest official comparison is January to March 2026, because Met Éireann has monthly climate statements through March and daily station data up to 19 April 2026. April is still in progress, so anything beyond that becomes “current impression” rather than settled climate bookkeeping.

And on the numbers, 2026 has not been imagining things. January 2026 was wet nationally, with Ireland at 123% of the 1991–2020 average and 164mm of rain overall. Around Dublin it was especially grim: Phoenix Park had 141mm, Dublin Airport 137.7mm, and Casement 114.5mm. For Phoenix Park and Dublin Airport, it was the second wettest January on record, and for Casement it was the wettest January since 1995. That is not “a few showers now and then”; that is a properly committed Irish January.

Then came February 2026, which apparently looked at January and decided the standard had been set. Nationally, February was 119% of average, with 126.0mm, ranking as the 19th wettest February. Dublin Airport had its wettest February on record with 133.7mm, while Phoenix Park had 132.6mm, its second wettest February on record. So, if people in D15 felt that the sky had developed a personal issue with them, the data is not entirely unsympathetic.

March 2026 was a bit less dramatic, though still not exactly Mediterranean. National rainfall came in at 108% of average with 102.1mm. Locally it was much more ordinary than the previous two months: Casement 56.6mm, Dublin Airport 56.8mm, and Phoenix Park 55.5mm—all only a little above average rather than apocalyptic. In other words, March was not the month that broke anyone; January and February had already done the damage.



So how does 2026 so far compare with recent years? Against 2025, it is clearly wetter. Met Éireann described January 2025 as below average nationally for rainfall, February 2025 at Dublin Airport was only 48.3mm, and March 2025 was exceptionally dry nationally at 36.2mm, with Dublin Airport getting just 13.5mm, its driest March since 1990. By contrast, Dublin Airport logged 137.7mm in January 2026, 133.7mm in February 2026, and 56.8mm in March 2026—about 328.2mm across the first quarter. So compared with the same stretch of 2025, 2026 has been much wetter in Dublin and noticeably wetter nationally too.

Against 2024, it is more of a split decision. January 2024 was relatively modest locally, with Casement on 58.7mm, and February 2024 was wet but not 2026-level chaos in Dublin terms, with Casement on 64.9mm. But then March 2024 arrived like a man kicking in the pub door after closing time: Dublin Airport had 115.4mm, its third-highest March rainfall on record, and its highest daily fall for March on record. So, 2026 has had a wetter opening two months than 2024 around Dublin, but March 2024 was far wetter than March 2026.

Against 2023, 2026 again looks very front-loaded. January 2023 was much drier in Dublin, with 41.4mm at Dublin Airport and 42.4mm at Phoenix Park. February 2023 was so dry that Phoenix Park had its driest February since 1965, with long dry spells around Dublin stations. But March 2023 was a belter in the other direction: Dublin Airport recorded 119.3mm, its wettest March since 1947. So compared with 2023, 2026 has been much wetter in January and February, but not as wild as March 2023 once spring got going.

So, the verdict is this: no, 2026 is not proving to be the wettest imaginable year in Dublin and Kildare. Ireland has produced worse individual months in recent years, especially March 2023 and March 2024 around Dublin. But yes, the feeling that 2026 has been relentlessly wet is grounded in reality, because January and February 2026 were genuinely exceptional in Dublin, with near-record or record rainfall at the main nearby stations. It is not that the whole year has been one endless hosepipe from heaven. It is that the year came out of the traps absolutely flying.

And the good news, if one dares use that phrase in Ireland before June, is that the current pattern is at least giving the east a breather. So, it will stop raining. It just will not sign anything in writing.

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# The Quiet Shame of the Robot Lawn Mower

Why outsourcing the grass to a small silent machine feels like a moral collapse



**T**here was a time in Ireland when cutting the grass meant something.

It meant duty. It meant rhythm. It meant me in old runners pushing a mower up and down a damp suburban lawn with the grim determination of a man defending civilisation itself. It meant the smell of petrol, the roar of an engine, the occasional muttered curse when the cord wouldn't start, and the deeply satisfying sight of neat stripes appearing where once there had been only botanical laziness.

**Now I stand at the kitchen window in a clean jumper, holding a coffee, while a robot the size of a stubborn suitcase glides silently around my lawn like it owns the deeds.**

And I feel guilty. Not just a little guilty. Deeply, irrationally, culturally guilty. The kind of guilt that seems to come not from my own conscience, but from generations of Irish people silently judging me from beyond the grave. Men who dug drains by hand. Women who scrubbed steps with brushes. Ancestors who survived hardship, emigration and turf smoke, all so that one day I could say, "No, I won't be cutting the grass myself — the little fella does it now."

It is, on paper, a triumph. The robot mower is efficient, quiet and weirdly diligent. It never complains. It never "might do it tomorrow." It doesn't disappear for tea halfway through the job. It simply emerges, lowers itself into position like a tiny military device, and gets on with it. Rain permitting, it patrols the lawn with the single-minded focus of a parish woman straightening hymn books before Mass. The grass looks great.

**Which only makes the guilt worse.**

Because what exactly am I now supposed to do with the time that has been freed up? This is where the robot mower really becomes emotionally complicated. When you've spent years telling yourself you're too busy, too wrecked, too under pressure, the

arrival of a machine that quietly removes one of your standing excuses is not entirely welcome.

You can no longer stomp around the place announcing that you'll be "out with the mower later" as though preparing for agricultural battle. You can no longer return indoors flushed and self-righteous, looking for praise and possibly a sandwich. You cannot dramatically inspect the grass height like a man responsible for national food security. The robot has stripped you of the performance of labour, and what remains is just... you.

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CONTINUES P.30



# Cllr. Ted LEDDY



087 327 6630 | tedleddy2014@gmail.com | www.tedleddy.ie

Working with Emer Currie TD, Siobhan Shovlin and Regina Doherty MEP

## My Recent Motions

View below my recent motions submitted to Fingal Council meetings. If you wish to know the outcome please get in touch.

“That the Chief Executive arrange a meeting with the Operations Department, the Active Travel Department and the newly formed Castleknock Business Group and other stakeholders to discuss actionable improvements that can be made to Castleknock Village to address congestion, footfall and visual enhancements.”

“That the Chief Executive installs an uncontrolled zebra crossing at the Deerpark /Hawthorn roundabout in Castleknock.”

“That the Chief Executive conducts research into, and issues a report on, the safety and integrity of the land on the northern slopes of Liffey Valley, given recent landslides.”

“That the Chief Executive commissions the Community Department to paint a mural on the wall between Fortlawn Crescent and Sheepmoor Green.”



On the weekend of June 13th - June 14th the Castleknock Village festival will be taking place once again alongside the Castleknock 5k Run. To mark the 5th year the festival will now be a two day event. On Saturday there will be a number of events such as a dog show, a historical walk, a concert in the church of Ireland. For more details keep an eye on our new Facebook and Instagram social media pages.



I am very pleased that 14 new Gardai recruits are being allocated to Blanchardstown Garda station. If anyone has any crime or safety issue they would like to raise with me please get in touch.

### BOARDS AND COMMITTEES I SERVE ON

- Housing Strategic Policy Committee
- Blanchardstown Drugs and Alcohol Task Force
- Homestart Community Creche Blakestown
- President Castleknock Lions Club
- Chair Castleknock Village Festival Committee
- Dublin & Dun Laoghaire education and Training Board
- Fingal Local Community Safety Partnership

**Worse again, the robot mower seems to enjoy its work.**

That's the part nobody tells you. It doesn't lumber or groan. It whirs. It potters. It moves with a smug serenity that suggests it has achieved a work-life balance entirely unavailable to the rest of us. It does one thing, does it well, and then goes home to charge itself. Frankly, it's become the most emotionally secure thing on the property.

And yet, despite my unease, I have grown fond of it.

This is how it starts. First you refer to it as "the mower." Then, before you know it, you're checking on it. Defending it. Wondering if it's all right in heavy rain. Giving it a name like Seamus, or Mick, or Mo Mowlawn. You begin speaking about it to visitors in a tone usually reserved for rescue dogs.

"There he is now," you say, with quiet pride. "He's after doing the front already."

The Irish relationship with technology is a complicated one. We love convenience, but we don't like appearing soft. We want the smart home, but we also want to maintain the fiction that we are still hardy, capable people who could light a fire with damp sticks and cut a half-acre with a rusty Flymo if the nation required it.

**The robot mower exposes this contradiction beautifully.**

It is both a luxury and a relief. It is both impressive and faintly ridiculous. It saves time, effort and back pain, but it also leaves you feeling like a member of the landed gentry who has somehow employed a very small, very efficient groundskeeper.

And perhaps that is the real issue. The guilt is not really about laziness. It is about identity. In Ireland, we still carry a strong belief that if a job can be done manually, then there is virtue in doing it the hard way. Suffering, however minor, still feels morally useful. We don't entirely trust ease. Ease feels suspicious. Ease feels foreign. Ease feels like the sort of thing that should probably be followed by rain, tax, or a cautionary tale.

So yes, I now have a robot cutting my lawn. Yes, I occasionally watch it through the window while doing absolutely nothing of value. Yes, a part of me suspects this is the first step towards full domestic uselessness.

**But the lawn looks fantastic.**

And if that is wrong, then perhaps I no longer want to be right.

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# Moya Brennan

The Donegal Voice That Carried Irish to the World

Some singers are admired. Some are successful. A very small number seem to arrive with a sound so distinctive that the first few notes are enough to stop a room. Moya Brennan belonged to that rare company. As the voice of Clannad and through a long solo career, she helped shape what much of the world thinks of as the sound of Ireland: haunting, luminous, rooted in tradition but never trapped by it. Following her death on 13 April 2026 at the age of 73, the tributes made clear what listeners had known for decades — that Ireland had lost not just a singer, but one of its great cultural ambassadors.

Her legacy begins, of course, with the voice itself. It is one of those overused descriptions to call a singer “unique,” but in Brennan’s case it is simply accurate. Her tone could be whisper-light and then suddenly full of ache, clarity and atmosphere. Bono once described it as among the greatest voices the human ear has experienced, and that praise never felt like hyperbole. Brennan’s singing with Clannad gave Celtic music an ethereal, modern reach without stripping away its soul. It was music that sounded ancient and contemporary at the same time, and her voice was the thread that held those worlds together.

What made her achievement even more remarkable was that she did not dilute her identity to find an audience. Brennan was raised in Gaoth Dobhair, in the Donegal Gaeltacht, and Irish was not an ornament in her music or a clever branding exercise. It was part of the grain of her life. She grew up in a deeply musical family connected to Leo’s Tavern, one of the best-known musical hearths in the country, and from

that local, Irish-speaking world came a body of work that travelled far beyond it.

That is why her role in promoting the Irish language matters so much. Brennan did not lecture audiences into admiring Irish. She persuaded them by making it beautiful, emotionally immediate and internationally resonant. Clannad’s “Theme from Harry’s Game” remains the landmark example: **a song in Irish that reached No. 5 in the UK Singles Chart and**

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**became the first Irish-language song to break so decisively into mainstream British pop culture.**

That kind of cultural influence is easy to underestimate because Brennan wore it so lightly. She was never the loudest figure in the room, nor the sort of artist who needed to batter people over the head with declarations about heritage. Instead, she made Irish feel natural, musical and alive. For many listeners outside Ireland, Clannad was an early doorway into the language. For many within Ireland, especially those who may have associated Irish with schoolbooks, rules and guilt, Brennan's music offered something more seductive: the language as beauty, memory and belonging. That may be one of her finest achievements.

And then there was Donegal. In Brennan's work, Donegal was never just a birthplace in the biographical notes. Even when she became an international figure, Donegal remained central to how she understood herself. That bond was recognised formally when she was named Donegal Person of the Year for 2023 and honoured in 2024, but people in the county had long since claimed her as one of their own in the deepest sense of the phrase.

Her broader honours tell their own story. With Clannad, Brennan's career brought major international recognition, including a BAFTA, an Ivor Novello and a Grammy-winning legacy, while her own contribution was recognised in Ireland with an honorary doctorate from Dublin City University. Those awards matter, not because they define the artist, but because they confirm the scale of what she achieved: she took music shaped by family, place and language, and made it matter on a world stage.

Yet the phrase that keeps returning in tributes is "First Lady of Celtic Music," and it fits because Brennan combined authority with gentleness. There was no bluster to her art. She did not need it. Her power lay in suggestion, tone and emotional intelligence.

**So what is Moya Brennan's legacy?**

It is the legacy of a voice that sounded unmistakably of Ireland while speaking far beyond Ireland. It is the legacy of an artist who made the Irish language persuasive not by argument, but by artistry. In an era when identity is often performed noisily, Brennan did something far more enduring. She sang her inheritance with such grace that the rest of the world leaned in to listen.



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# The Great Irish Coffee Delusion

How we made decent coffee easy to sell almost everywhere — and somehow forgot how to make it worth drinking – by Grumpy Bloke



**T**here was a time when going for a coffee actually meant going for a coffee.

You met someone in a café. You sat down. You got a proper cup. Maybe even a saucer, if the place was doing well. You had a chat, watched people passing the window, and drank the coffee while it was still hot and actually tasted the way it was meant to taste. It was a small pause in the day. A civilised one.

**Now, in Ireland, coffee can be bought from just about anywhere with a plug socket and a serving hatch.**

A horse trailer. A petrol station. A corner of a shop that used to sell nothing more exotic than batteries and Tayto. A converted van parked in a lay-by with fairy lights and a sign promising “artisan coffee” as though that settles the matter.

And look, fair play to people. There’s no denying the hustle. Ireland has taken to coffee-selling with serious enthusiasm. Give us a decent espresso machine, a blackboard menu and a milk fridge, and we’ll have a new coffee business up and running before the paint is dry.

The only problem is this: selling coffee is not the same as knowing how to make coffee.

**That’s the bit that gets lost.**

We’ve become brilliant at the appearance of coffee culture. We have the trailers, the takeaway cups, the flat whites, the oat milk, the little menus with words like cortado and piccolo on them. We have beans with lovely packaging and staff in aprons and enough reclaimed wood to build a small chapel.

**But sometimes the coffee itself is pure misery.**

Too hot. Too bitter. Too foamy. Too weak. Too burnt. Too expensive for the level of disappointment involved. It’s often coffee made by someone who knows how to operate the machine, but not necessarily how to get the best out of it. And there is a difference. A big one.

A proper barista is not just a person standing beside a shiny machine. A proper barista understands timing, texture, balance. They know milk should be smooth, not stiff enough to plaster a wall. They know coffee should taste rich and rounded, not like someone whispered “Italy” over a cup of hot panic.

And that finer art — the actual craft of making good coffee — feels like it’s being squeezed out by convenience.

**That’s probably clearest in the paper cup.**

Because coffee used to be something you sat with. Now it’s something you carry around while doing three other things. We buy it full of hope. We take a few sips. Then it goes into the car, comes into the shop, sits beside us through a phone

call, and ends up half-finished in a cup holder getting colder and sadder by the minute.

There must be thousands of takeaway coffees across Ireland right now living out their final days untouched in cars.

We don’t really drink coffee the way we used to. We consume it in theory. We like having it. Holding it. Buying it. We like the idea of it. But too often the moment itself is gone. The sitting down, the slowing down, the conversation, the enjoying it while it’s fresh — all of that has been pushed aside by rushing, errands and cardboard lids that never quite fit properly.

Somewhere along the line, coffee stopped being a little ritual and became another item in the daily scramble.

And maybe that’s why people feel nostalgic for real café culture, even if they wouldn’t put it in those exact words. What they miss is not just “nicer coffee”. It’s the whole thing around it. The proper cup. The decent chair. The café hum. The barista who actually knows what they’re doing. The sense that this drink was made with care and meant to be enjoyed there and then — not carried around like a warm accessory until it turns on you.

To be fair, there are still brilliant places doing it properly. There are excellent baristas all over Ireland, in cafés, kiosks and yes, even in some trailers, making beautiful coffee with real skill. You know the difference straight away when you get one. The coffee tastes balanced. The milk is right. Nothing is trying too hard. It just works.

But they can be hard to find among the flood of places now selling coffee because coffee happens to be sellable.

And that’s really the story of it. Ireland made proper barista-style coffee easy for anyone to offer. That was the first leap. But somewhere in the rush, we confused access with quality. We decided that because coffee was now everywhere, it must also be good everywhere. It isn’t.

So maybe what’s needed now is not more coffee hatches, more trailers or more cups with minimalist logos on them. Maybe what’s needed is a small return to standards. To slowing down. To professional baristas. To cafés that treat coffee as something more than a handy add-on to a scone and a sausage roll.

Because deep down, I think a lot of people are longing for the same thing: a real coffee culture again.

A proper coffee. In a real cup. Made by someone who understands the craft. Drunk sitting down, with a conversation, before it goes cold.

Which, in modern Ireland, now feels oddly radical.



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# Building Better Pathways in D15

On Our Footpaths, Pitches, and Public Spaces

*Dear Resident,*

I am delighted to share some of my most recent representation on behalf of our community with you.

## Footpaths

- New connecting footpath in Brookhaven, D15
- Remedial work on footpath between Westway Rise and Westway View in Corduff, D15
- Long footpath along Castlecurragh Road to Warrenstown Road in Mulhuddart, D15



## Sports and Community Facilities

I recently requested Fingal County Council to give priority consideration to facilitating anchor tenancy of Tyrrelstown United Football Club on Tyrrelstown Astro pitch, or any other grounds where the council has a holding in the area, including the allocation of lands for the building of club grounds. The motion was roundly supported by councillors.

You will recall that I raised a similar motion on behalf of Corduff United FC, and I am looking forward to reporting positive outcomes on these interventions in the months to come.

I would like to thank the team of managers and staff of



Fingal County Council for the brilliant and exquisitely beautiful facilities that have been established in Dunsoghly Estate and Melville Road in Dublin 11.



Melville Road Pylon Beautification Garden



Dunsoghly Estate Playground Upgrade

## Recent Motions

Public Transportation for Tyrrelstown, Kilmartin & Hollystown

In response to the challenges faced by residents, I recently asked the Council to write to the National Transport Authority (NTA) to request an in-depth review of the current public transport situation in the Tyrrelstown,

Kilmartin and Hollystown areas and to outline plans to upscale service regularity. I hope to update residents on this intervention as soon as I receive a response.

### Road Rehabilitation and Repairs

In view of the growing number of complaints by vehicle owners, I recently raised a motion to ask the Council to review and conduct an audit on the status and condition of Fingal County Council's roads and to report sections where repairs are needed. I am looking forward to reporting back effective repair works on our local roads.

### Dog Off-Leash Pen for Lanesborough & Seagrave Parks

I recently raised a motion to ask the Council to establish a dog off-leash area for Lanesborough and/or Seagrave Parks, in response to the longstanding request by residents. This would create a safe area for dog owners to walk their pets with minimal restraints.

### Speed Cushion Ramps on Tyrrelstown Roads

I recently raised a motion for the Council to provide an update on the installation of speed cushions on roads in Tyrrelstown where vehicles have been observed speeding dangerously.

### Grace's Law

Following several interventions, I join the majority of residents in sharing our support for the promulgation of Grace's Law, which bans the use of scramblers and e-scooters in our parks, roads and public spaces. I would like to call on parents of owners of these vehicles to ensure compliance with the law to avoid preventable injuries and death.

Working With

### Working with your Fianna Fáil team in Dublin West:

Minister Jack Chambers, Barry Andrews MEP, and Cllrs Tom Kitt and Eimear Carbone Mangan.

### Clinics

Do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss any matter of concern. Clinics can be arranged at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

**Cllr. JK Onwumereh**

Fingal County Council

Grove Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

Tel: 089 964 2783

Email: [jk.onwumereh@cllrs.fingal.ie](mailto:jk.onwumereh@cllrs.fingal.ie)

# Cllr John-Kingsley ONWUMEREH

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# CASTLEKNOCK

## Tidy Towns

*Environmental, Sustainability & Climate Action Group*

Castleknock Tidy Towns recently held a high-level delegation meeting in the Council Chambers with officials from Fingal County Council and local public representatives to address critical priorities for the future of Castleknock Village.

**The key items on the agenda were:**

Strategic investment in the regeneration of Castleknock Village

Inclusion of Castleknock in the national Town Centre First programme

Targeted measures to tackle chronic traffic congestion and improve road safety

Historically, Castleknock has been excluded from national town and village renewal schemes, limiting access to vital funding for the enhancement and rejuvenation of the village. However, following sustained lobbying and advocacy by Castleknock Tidy Towns, it has now been confirmed that Castleknock will, for the first time, be included in the Town Centre First national programme this autumn.

This represents a significant milestone for the community. The Town Centre First initiative focuses on upgrading the public realm, strengthening walking and cycling infrastructure, and addressing long-standing traffic challenges. The programme will be specifically tailored to

Castleknock, with the objective of creating a vibrant, sustainable, heritage-led and community-driven village centre that meets the needs of a modern, growing population.

Crucially, inclusion in this national scheme will unlock access to dedicated funding streams and specialist support services, ensuring that identified projects can be effectively planned and delivered.

Following the delegation meeting, a series of on-site engagements will take place involving Council officials, the local community and Castleknock businesses. A “Town Team” will also be established comprising key stakeholders and supported by Fingal’s Town Regeneration Officers to drive the initiative forward.

This is expected to mark the first time a rural-style regeneration framework will be applied within a Dublin metropolitan suburb, positioning Castleknock as a potential model for similar communities nationwide.

Regards,  
Declan Mescall  
Civic Engagement Lead.  
Castleknock Tidy Towns.  
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## No Barriers to Blanch?

Why Paid Parking Has Struck a Nerve in Dublin 15

**B**lanchardstown Centre is not just a shopping centre. That is the first thing anyone outside Dublin 15 tends to miss. On paper, yes, it is a major retail destination: around 1.2 million square feet with more than 180 shops and restaurants, and one of the biggest commercial hubs in the country. Strategic Value Partners confirmed its acquisition of the centre in late 2024 in a deal reported at about €600 million, underlining just how significant the site is as a business asset.

But locals do not experience it as an “asset”. They experience it as part of ordinary life. It is where people shop, meet, browse, wait, kill time, bring children, and fit errands around the rest of a busy week. For many in Dublin 15, Blanch is not some special expedition. It is simply woven into the rhythm of the place.

That is why the plan to introduce paid parking has caused such a reaction. In November 2025, Fingal County Council granted planning permission to Blanche Retail Nominee Ltd for a “Mobility Enhancement Project” that includes a paid parking regime at Blanchardstown Centre. The decision was met with protests and then appeals, and the case is now live before An Coimisiún Pleanála, which lists it as due for decision on 23 April 2026, so by the time you read this we may have a decision.

The owners’ case is not hard to understand. According to statements reported in December 2025, the centre says the wider investment package is worth up to €60 million and includes a new 45,000 sq ft Blue Mall, along with upgrades to

parking, wayfinding and transport facilities intended to improve mobility, access and congestion. The centre also said it was considering the impact on vulnerable customers and regular visitors, and that staff would have a dedicated parking area at a reduced rate plus a minimum 90-day grace period once paid parking begins, which it said was planned for early 2027.

All of that sounds reasonable in developer language. Better circulation. Better mobility. Better customer experience. It is the sort of wording that arrives wearing a high-vis jacket and carrying a clipboard of good intentions. Yet the strength of the backlash suggests that many locals believe this is not really about mobility at all. They suspect it is about monetising something that has long felt public in everything but legal ownership.

And that is the real story here. The argument is not simply about whether drivers should pay to park. Plenty of people pay for parking in plenty of places and grumble briefly before getting on with life. Blanchardstown Centre is different because, over time, it has come to function as something more than a private retail complex. It has become part of the social infrastructure of Dublin 15.

That may sound grand, but it matters. Some places serve a practical purpose and an emotional one at the same time. Blanch is where people go because it is easy, familiar and central. It works for the quick errand and the half-day wander. You can call that convenience, but convenience is often another word for quality of life. The easier a place is to use, the more deeply it becomes part of a community’s



habits.

Critics of the parking plan have tapped directly into that feeling. Reporting on the objections and protests highlighted concerns that paid barriers could reduce accessibility, push more traffic and parking pressure into nearby residential areas, and hit workers and

regular users particularly hard. Opponents have also argued that the centre's role in local life goes beyond shopping alone, which is part of the reason the issue has become so politically charged.

There is also a broader cultural anxiety at work. Dublin 15 has spent years living with the side effects

[CONTINUES P42](#)



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of growth: more traffic, more pressure on roads, more competition for space, and a creeping suspicion that everyday life keeps getting more expensive, more managed and less spontaneous. Against that backdrop, paid parking at Blanch does not land as an isolated policy. It lands as another little charge on ordinary existence. Another small reminder that even the simple act of turning up somewhere now comes with terms and conditions.

And that is where the issue becomes bigger than parking. Because what people are really asking is this: what kind of place is Blanchardstown Centre meant to be? If it is purely a commercial machine, then paid parking can be presented as a rational operational choice. If it is also part of the civic and social life of Dublin 15, then the calculation changes. People start asking not just whether the system is efficient, but whether it feels fair.

Fairness is often the thing planners and investors underestimate. A measure can make sense in a spreadsheet and still feel completely wrong in the life of a community. That is especially true in suburban Ireland, where large shopping centres are not just places to spend money. They become de facto town centres, meeting points and fallback destinations in areas where no older main street performs quite the same role.

The paid parking row has exposed that contradiction perfectly. The centre is privately owned, but socially it feels shared. The owners are entitled to improve and manage their property, but the public relationship with the place is built on long habit and

unspoken expectation. Free parking was not just a convenience. It was part of the unwritten deal. Change that, and people do not merely recalculate the cost of a visit. They question whether the place still belongs to them in the way it used to.

That is why this story has resonated beyond the usual planning circles. It goes to the heart of suburban identity. In Dublin 15, Blanch is not just where you buy shoes or pick up birthday cards. It is where a growing area has, for years, half-consciously met itself. Put a barrier on that experience, and even before a single fee is announced, people begin to feel that something familiar is being enclosed.

The planning process will decide whether the scheme proceeds. At the time of writing this article, the appeal is still live and awaiting a decision from An Coimisiún Pleanála. But whatever the outcome, the row has already revealed something useful: the people of Dublin 15 do not see Blanchardstown Centre as just another car park with shops attached. They see it as part of how local life works. And once a community feels that, no barrier is ever just a barrier. It becomes a statement about who a place is for.

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## Phoenix Park set for new eco-toilets this summer – Currie

**N**ew eco-toilet facilities are to be installed in the Phoenix Park this summer, a Fine Gael TD has said.

Deputy Emer Currie said the Office of Public Works (OPW) has confirmed that six eco-toilets will be installed by June 2026, following the completion of a tender process.

The new facilities will be located at the Papal Cross car park and the car park adjacent to the GAA pitches and Phoenix Cricket Club.

“This is a very welcome and practical step forward,” Deputy Currie said.

*“I have been raising the lack of toilet facilities in the Phoenix Park since my time in the Seanad, and I am pleased to see progress now being made.”*

Deputy Currie said the lack of water and wastewater infrastructure has long been cited as a barrier to providing additional toilets in the park, despite growing demand from visitors.

“For years, we have been told that additional toilets could not be provided due to the lack of water and wastewater connections,” she said.

*“These eco-toilets show that there are simple, workable solutions, particularly in busy and more remote parts of the park.”*

The issue has been raised repeatedly by Deputy Currie in the Oireachtas, particularly in the context of improving accessibility for walkers, families, older people and people with disabilities.

“The Phoenix Park is one of our most important public amenities, but people need to feel comfortable when they are there,” she said.

*“Access to toilets is a basic requirement and makes a real difference to how people use and enjoy the park.”*

Deputy Currie said the installation of these facilities should be seen as an important first step.

“This is a very positive development and an important first step, but it cannot be the last,” she said.

*“We need to see further expansion of toilet facilities across the park, particularly near major landmarks, amenities and key entrances, so that people can fully access and enjoy everything the park has to offer.”*



# STILL RUNNING ON DIESEL?

Ireland's Second-Hand Car Market Hasn't Read the Memo

**T**he Irish second-hand car market is one of those places where theory and real life have a very public disagreement. In theory, we are all gliding serenely towards an electric future, charging elegantly at motorway hubs while discussing kilowatts and sustainability over oat-milk flat whites. In real life, half the country is still peering at a tidy 2018 diesel estate and thinking, "That'll do grand." And the numbers suggest that instinct is not entirely foolish. Ireland's used-car market remains busy: SIMI says imported used-car registrations hit 71,813 in 2025, up 16.6% on 2024, and by the end of March 2026 they were already up 39.2% year on year.

That tells its own story. The market for second-hand cars in Ireland is not some gloomy waiting room between the old world and the new one. It is a market with serious momentum, and it is still shaped less by ideology than by the old holy trinity of Irish motoring: price, practicality and whether the thing will get you to Galway and back without drama.

So, are diesel cars holding their value better than the rest? The careful answer is: better than used EVs, yes; better than every corner of the second-hand market, not necessarily. Done Deal's H1 2025 price index found that the broader internal-

combustion market was still rising, with its main used-car index up 3.1% year on year, while used EV prices were down 2.8% annually. In other words, the great collapse in used EV values has eased, but diesel and petrol have generally held firmer.

Diesel's resilience becomes even clearer when you compare like with like. Done Deal's analysis of dealer-listed cars under five years old found that, by H1 2025, used EVs were already 14.5% cheaper than comparable diesels after adjusting for age, mileage and similar attributes. For 2022-registered cars, the median asking price in July 2025 was €33,950 for diesel, compared with €27,950 for EVs. By March 2026, that gap had widened further: reports based on the latest Done Deal index said used EVs were now about 11% below comparable diesel cars, with a typical three-year-old EV around €28,825 and a comparable diesel around €35,893. So yes, diesel is still retaining a stronger used-market price than EVs.

That does not mean diesel is storming ahead in the new-car market. Quite the opposite. SIMI says diesel accounted for 17.09% of new-car registrations in 2025, and by March 2026 diesel's share of the new-car market had fallen to 12.92%. CSO data also shows the combined share of new petrol and diesel cars dropped to 43% in 2025,

down from 54% in 2024. So, the new market is shifting away from diesel quite quickly. But the second-hand market is operating on a different timetable, because used buyers tend to care less about being on the right side of history and more about range, fuel economy on longer trips, and whether the purchase feels financially safe.

And that, really, is diesel's remaining strength in Ireland: familiarity. A diesel may not be fashionable, but it still feels legible. People know what it is. They know how far it will go. They know where to fill it. They know what a mechanic will say about it, even if the mechanic says it while inhaling through his teeth and charging you for something called a sensor. Diesel has the advantage of being boring in a reassuring way. It is the sensible raincoat of Irish motoring.

Electric cars, by contrast, still carry a residue of uncertainty, even as they become more common. The anxiety has not disappeared; it has simply become more specific. EY's 2026 Mobility Consumer Index found that 40% of Irish car buyers intend to choose an electrified vehicle in the next two years, which is a strong signal of momentum. But among hesitant buyers, 36% still cited uncertainty around charging and running costs, 31% said they lacked enough charging infrastructure nearby, 30% worried about upfront purchase prices and 30% were concerned about battery replacement costs. That is not anti-EV hysteria. It is practical caution.

In fairness, some of those nerves are rooted in ordinary Irish housing reality. If you have a driveway and can charge at home, an EV looks much more attractive. If you live in an estate where parking is a mild blood sport and the nearest reliable charger seems to be in another county, the calculation changes. The State knows this is the pressure point. Government said in February 2026 that Ireland had passed 212,000 registered EVs, and the charging network is being expanded: 53 new fast and ultra-fast recharging hubs with 175 charging points were announced for the national road network in June 2025, and a further 90 hubs were announced in October 2025. That is real progress, but it also tells you why some buyers still feel infrastructure is catching up rather than comfortably ahead.

The interesting twist is that used EVs are not failing in Ireland. Far from it. Cartell says 15,425 used EVs were sold in Ireland in 2025, up 31% from 11,754 in 2024. Their analysis points to improving consumer confidence, a bigger pool of ex-fleet and PCP-return cars, and better charging

options as reasons why used EVs are becoming more mainstream. So, the market is no longer saying, "No thanks." It is saying, "Maybe, but only if the price is right."

Which brings us back to the central question. Diesel cars are not exactly roaring back like a triumphant king, but in the second-hand market they are certainly not dead. They are holding value better than used EVs because they still suit a lot of Irish drivers, particularly those doing longer journeys or lacking home charging. At the same time, the direction of travel is unmistakable: EV prices have become much more competitive, used EV sales are rising, and the infrastructure story is gradually improving.

So, is there still anxiety about electric cars? Absolutely. But it is no longer the old fear that the battery will expire somewhere outside Longford, and you will have to live in it. It is a more grounded anxiety about cost, charging access and convenience. Diesel, meanwhile, continues to enjoy the great advantage of every old Irish favourite: it may not be the future, but it still makes immediate sense on a wet Tuesday.

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## Unexpected Item in the Bagging Area

The Great Supermarket Swizz or a Modern Miracle?

**T**here was a time when going to the supermarket involved a simple social contract. You selected your groceries, joined a queue behind someone buying enough provisions to survive a mild apocalypse, and eventually a trained human being scanned your messages to the world in the form of ham, teabags, digestive biscuits and a suspiciously emotional amount of grated cheddar.

**Now, of course, you are invited to do it yourself.**

Self-service checkouts were sold to us as freedom. Speed. Efficiency. Control. No more waiting behind a trolley containing an entire branch of the vegetable kingdom and a family pack of toilet roll the size of a studio flat. In theory, they are a marvellous idea. For the shopper with six items, a bank card and a pressing desire to avoid small talk, they can be a blessing. Retail technology companies openly pitch self-checkout as a way to speed up lines, offer more choice and let fewer staff supervise more lanes at once, which is a beautifully polished corporate way of saying: yes, you are helping with the work now.

**And that, really, is the heart of the matter.**

Are self-service checkouts a good thing? Yes, sometimes. Are they also supermarkets getting us to do their work for them? Also, yes. This is what in the trade might be called a win-win, except only one side is saving wages while the other side is trying to remember the code for loose carrots.

The ideal self-service experience lasts about 42 seconds. You scan a loaf, milk, a newspaper, tap your card, and glide off feeling like a citizen of the future. The machine thanks you for shopping there in the tone of a hostage reading a prepared statement. You nod politely. All is well.

Then you buy a weighed item.

This is where the dream begins to wobble.

There you are, staring at a touchscreen full of tiny icons,

trying to decide whether your purchase is listed under apples, fruit, fresh produce, seasonal, local, organic, loose, or “items beginning with a sense of personal failure”. The tomato you have known all your life suddenly becomes a philosophical problem. Is it salad? Is it veg? Is it technically fruit? What is a plum tomato, really, when a queue of irritated strangers is forming behind you?

The industry knows this is the weak spot. One retail tech firm now boasts about tools designed specifically to eliminate the hassle of manually searching PLU codes for produce. Which is a bit like a car manufacturer proudly announcing that its latest model is less likely to burst into flames.

**And then comes the choreography.**

Self-service checkouts are not really checkouts. They are performance art. You must scan in the correct order, place items in the correct area, and move with the caution of a bomb disposal expert. Put your basket down too early in the wrong tray bit and the machine behaves as though you have attempted a jewel heist. Pack too soon and it emits a warning noise that can turn a calm adult into someone suddenly trying to explain themselves to a machine.

**“Unexpected item in bagging area.”**

Unexpected by whom? It was a tin of beans. I scanned it. We have all seen it happen. It is not a mystery object fallen from space.

And the basket issue is a humiliation all of its own. The moment you place your basket where any normal person would place a basket, the machine goes into a kind of electronic moral panic. Lights flash. A distant staff member looks up. For one terrible second you appear to be the sort of character security staff discuss at briefing meetings.

Then there is the alcohol moment, perhaps the finest comic flourish in the entire system.

You scan a bottle of wine. The screen freezes. A warning

appears. Approval required.

Now, this is fair enough in theory. Shops have age-check policies, including Challenge 25 style rules, and staff approval is part of how age-restricted sales are managed. Lidl Ireland's help pages reference Challenge 25, and Aldi Ireland says staff must check that you look 25 or over when serving alcohol.

**But theory and lived reality are two different things.**

There is something magnificently absurd about a machine demanding age clearance when you are quite clearly heading not for the nightclub but for the pension. The hair is silver. The knees have opinions. The face has seen governments rise and fall. Yet still you must stand there waiting for a 19-year-old staff member to come over and silently confirm that yes, this person is indeed old enough to purchase a bottle of Rioja and half a bar of Dairy Milk.

**It is, in its way, flattering. Annoying, but flattering.**

As for Aldi and Lidl, the old assumption that they somehow heroically resisted self-service checkouts is no longer really true. Lidl Ireland clearly has them: its customer-help pages refer to paying at a "Self-Check-Out", and recent new Irish stores in places like Ballybough and Bundoran have specifically advertised self-service checkouts as part of the layout. Aldi Ireland also started installing self-service checkouts in selected stores in 2024

and later expanded them to selected newer stores.

So, the answer is not that Aldi and Lidl do not have them. It is that they came to the party a bit differently, and many shoppers still associate them with the old model: brisk, efficient human cashiers firing groceries through the till at speeds previously seen only in military logistics.

That, perhaps, is why self-service remains such a mixed blessing. It works brilliantly when it works. For a few items, it is often faster. For anyone in a hurry, it can be ideal. But it also shifts a surprising amount of effort onto the shopper. You become cashier, packer, codebreaker, age-verification supplicant and, in extreme cases, amateur diplomat negotiating with a touchscreen about the true nature of a loose onion.

In the end, self-service checkouts are like many modern conveniences. They are wonderful right up to the precise second they are not. They save time until they waste it. They make shopping easier until they turn buying two pears and a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc into a live-action puzzle game.

So yes, they are a good thing. And yes, supermarkets are absolutely getting us to do some of their work for them.

The modern customer, it seems, is not always king.

Sometimes he is just the unpaid trainee on till number six.

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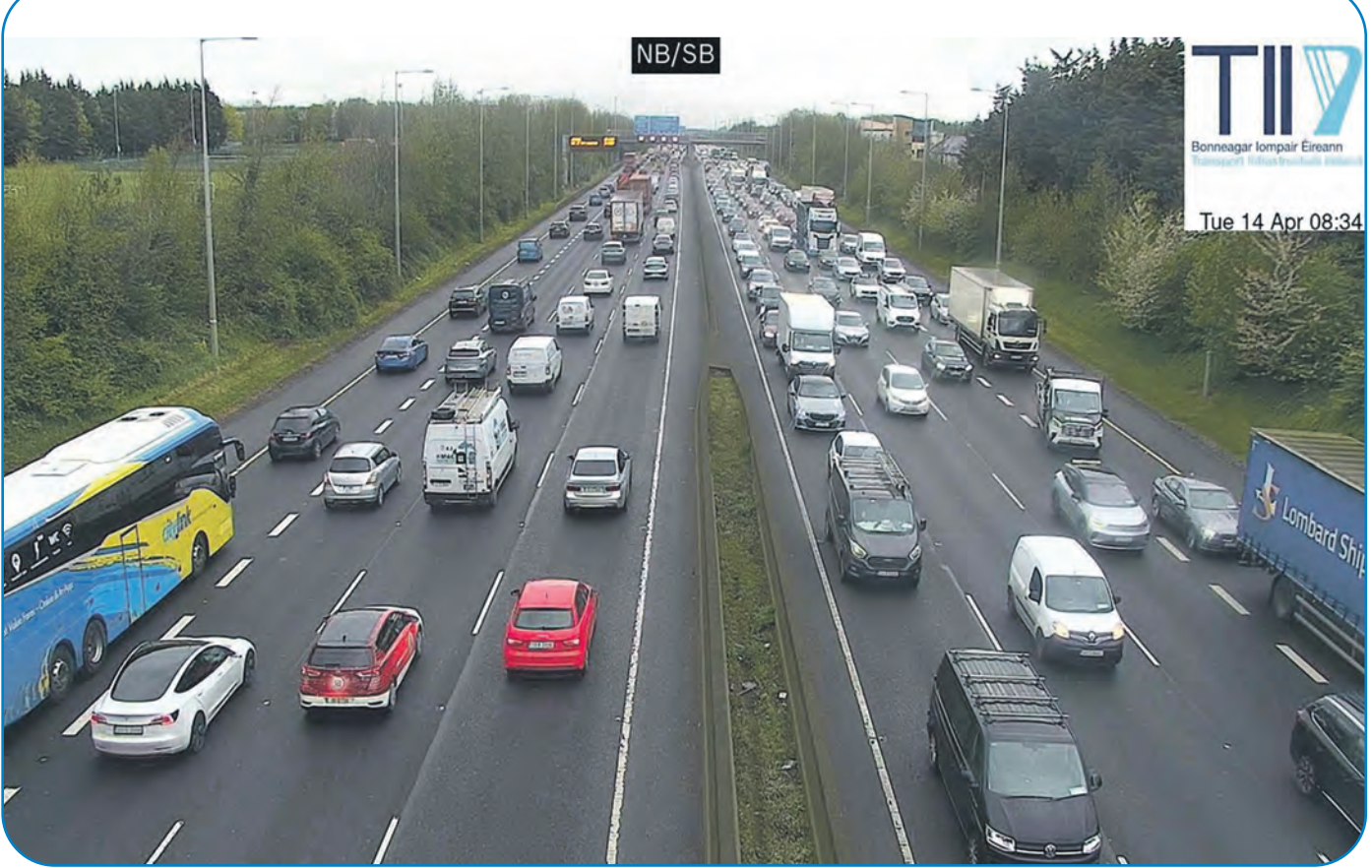
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# Will the N3 Ever Get Easier?

Dublin 15 Waits for the Road to the Future

If you want to understand modern life in Dublin 15, do not start with glossy brochures about connectivity, growth corridors or integrated transport. Sit in traffic on the N3 instead. Better still, sit on a bus that is meant to be moving but is in fact engaged in a long-term relationship with the brake pedal. There, in that slow crawl between hope and resignation, you will find the real Dublin 15 experience.

That is why the latest plans for the N3 between the M50 and Clonee matter so much. Fingal County Council, working with Meath County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, has now moved this project into Phase 2, with an “emerging preferred option” for the N3 M50 to Clonee Bus Priority and Active Travel Scheme. The stretch in question runs from Junction 2 at Snugborough to Junction 4B at Clonee, covering about 5.4 kilometres of one of the most important and most frustrating corridors in

the area. The official aim is to make journeys safer, quicker and more sustainable, while improving bus reliability, walking and cycling links, and road safety overall.

All of which sounds very sensible, and also very familiar. Dublin people have been promised better transport for so long that many now hear the phrase “improvements are planned” the way earlier generations heard “the phone engineer is on the way.” They believe it in theory. They just would not put money on seeing it before retirement. Still, this scheme does at least speak directly to the reality of life in Dublin 15: too many people, too many cars, too many daily journeys squeezed through infrastructure that has not kept up with the place that grew around it. That much is not ideology. It is simply what people live every morning. The council says the route is being redesigned specifically to support faster, more reliable bus services and

safer, more attractive walking and cycling facilities, while still supporting traffic flow on a very busy route.

And that is where the story gets interesting. Because this is not just about a road. It is about what sort of suburb Dublin 15 wants to be. For years, the area has lived with a strange contradiction. It is full of homes, schools, retail, industry, sports clubs and growing communities, yet so much of everyday life still depends on whether the traffic is behaving itself. A small delay becomes a large delay. A small accident becomes a regional event. A school run, a work journey, a doctor's appointment or a trip into Blanch can all end up governed by the same question: what is the N3 like? Even people who never use the phrase "transport infrastructure" know exactly what that means.

The scheme proposals include bus priority measures, active travel bridge infrastructure, and better connections to the wider BusConnects Core Bus Corridor network. Fingal says the point is to reduce bus journey times, improve reliability, provide safer and more sustainable travel options, and improve walking and cycling connectivity across the N3. In theory, that means a shift away from the old idea that the answer to congestion is simply more room for cars. In practice, it means trying to design a route that works better for people who do not want every journey in life to involve sitting in a queue while staring at the back of a van.

Of course, no transport scheme in Ireland arrives without a degree of suspicion. Locals have every right to ask awkward questions. Will this genuinely make commuting easier, or will it just rearrange the misery into a more environmentally branded format? Will buses actually become a realistic first choice for more people? Will

pedestrians and cyclists get routes that feel safe and coherent, or just a few disconnected bits of infrastructure that look impressive in consultation drawings? And perhaps the biggest local question of all: will anything on the N3 ever feel simpler?

That scepticism is not negativity. It is experience. Dublin 15 has spent years living at the sharp end of suburban growth. More houses, more activity, more pressure, more movement, but not always the matching ease of movement that should come with it. So, when the council talks about a more resilient and sustainable transport network, what residents want to know is not whether the wording sounds right. They want to know whether daily life will actually feel better. Fingal says the scheme is part of the National Development Plan 2021–2030, was reviewed in 2023, and has since been refined

CONTINUES P50

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to prioritise sustainable transport and improved accessibility along the corridor.

Still, something important is happening here. The language of transport is changing. For a long time, the dream sold to suburban Ireland was freedom through the car. And for many people, the car still is freedom. But the weakness in that model becomes obvious when everybody's freedom depends on the same clogged road at the same time. What this new N3 scheme appears to recognise is that a functioning suburb needs options. A bus has to be worth taking. Walking to a destination has to feel possible. Cycling has to feel safe enough that only the brave or slightly unhinged are not the sole participants. That is not anti-car. It is simply pro-sanity.

There is also a broader cultural point. Dublin 15 is often discussed in numbers: population, housing, road capacity, retail footfall. But it is also a place where people are trying to stitch together ordinary lives. They are dropping children to school, heading to work, caring for parents, getting to sports training, collecting shopping, fitting life into

the cracks of time. Transport affects all of that. It affects stress levels, family routines, punctuality, mood and even whether a person feels their community is manageable or exhausting. A better route is not just engineering. It is quality of life.

The public now have a chance to test the plans against reality. The consultation on the emerging preferred option runs from 20 April to 18 May 2026, with an in-person event at Blanchardstown Library on 28 April 2026 and another in Dunshaughlin on 29 April 2026. Fingal is inviting people who live, work, travel or do business in the area to review the maps and proposals and make submissions.

And perhaps that is the most important part of the whole story. Everyone in Dublin 15 already has an opinion on the N3. Most of them developed that opinion while stationary. Now, for once, there is a chance to put those views into the process before the next chapter is written. Whether the scheme ultimately transforms the commute or merely improves it at the edges, it is trying to address a truth that locals have known for years: Dublin 15 cannot keep growing on crossed fingers and brake lights alone.



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# Census 1926

Ireland Opens a Window on Itself

**T**he release of Ireland's 1926 census is more than a gift to family historians. It is the first full census of the Irish Free State, taken on 18 April 1926 and released exactly a century later, on 18 April 2026. The records are now freely searchable through the National Archives, with more refinements, corrections and analysis tools due to appear in phases over the coming year. Between the household forms and associated records, the project covers more than 700,000 returns and close to three million people, which makes it one of the richest snapshots ever opened up of everyday life in the young State.

## What makes the 1926 census so fascinating is the sheer amount of detail in it.

This was not just a headcount. The household return records names and surnames, relationship to the head of household, age in years and months, sex, marital or orphan status, birthplace, religion, Irish-language ability, occupation, and employer. It also asked married women for the length of

their marriage and the number of children born alive, while married men, widowers and widows were asked about living children and stepchildren under 16. There was even a question on the acreage of agricultural holdings. Alongside that were enumerators' returns for each townland or street, showing whether buildings were inhabited, how many families lived there, the head of each family, the number of males and females, and the number of rooms occupied. In other words, it lets us see not only who was here, but how they lived.

The next census after 1926 was the 1936 census, taken on 26 April 1936. Under Ireland's 100-year rule for census confidentiality, the 1936 returns are not due for public release until 2036. The CSO notes that censuses continued at ten-year intervals up to 1946, and that returns from 1926 onward remain closed for 100 years before transfer to public inspection.

## So, what does the 1926 census tell us about Ireland?

First, it shows a country that was still small, young and marked by long population decline. The population stood at 2.97 million, down by

just over 5% from 1911 and still part of the post-Famine demographic shrinkage that had defined Ireland for generations. More than 29% of the population was under 15, reflecting a high birth rate, while life expectancy at birth was only 57 for men and 58 for women. Dublin was already the largest population centre, but it accounted for 17% of the population, far less dominant than it is now.

It also shows an Ireland that was overwhelmingly Catholic, but not quite as monocultural as memory sometimes suggests. Roman Catholics made up 93% of the population, or 2,751,269 people. The remaining 7% fell into "Other Religions", including Church of Ireland, Presbyterians, Methodists, Jews and others. At the same time, 18% of the population were recorded as having Irish-language ability, with the strongest concentrations in the west and northwest: Galway at 47%, Mayo at 37% and Donegal at 34%. The CSO notes that 1926 was significant because it marked the first recorded increase in Irish speakers after decades of decline.

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## **In economic terms, the census describes a country still rooted in the land.**

There were 1,307,662 people at work, and agriculture alone accounted for 672,129 of them, or 51% of the workforce. The figures include more than 206,000 sons and daughters assisting on family farms, as well as nearly 90,000 agricultural labourers not living on the farm and more than 36,000 who did. Industrial trades and manufacturing employed 186,617 people, about 14% of workers, with tailoring, smithing, and baking among the biggest individual trades. The message is plain enough: this was still a rural society, and the farm was not just a workplace but a family system.

Then come the occupational details that make the census feel vividly human. The large number of nuns really does jump off the page.

## **In the category of professional occupations, there were 9,489 nuns and postulants, as well as 1,111 Christian Brothers and other monks.**

There were 5,266 female sick nurses and 10,604 female teachers, alongside 5,598 male teachers. These are not marginal numbers. They show how central religious life, education and care work were to the social fabric of the State.

The census also underlines how strongly women's paid work was concentrated in service roles. In personal service occupations, there were 63,766 female domestic servants living in and another 23,787 living out, compared with

1,818 and 827 men respectively. More broadly, personal service counted 109,461 women against 18,381 men. That tells its own story about class, gender and the kinds of work open to women in 1926 Ireland. Much of female employment sat in domestic service, teaching, nursing and religious life rather than in the professions or management as we would understand them today.

What emerges overall is a portrait of an Ireland that was devout, rural, youthful and still poor by modern standards, but not flat or featureless.

It was heavily Irish born, with 97% of residents born in Ireland, and inward migration was very limited.

## **Yet Dublin already stood apart as the most diverse county, with a higher share of people born in Britain and overseas, and the religious tables show distinct Protestant, Jewish and other minority communities across the State.**

So, the 1926 census does not simply confirm the old image of a narrow, homogeneous country. It complicates it. It shows an Ireland shaped by church and farm, certainly, but also by towns, trades, migration, minority communities and thousands upon thousands of lives that do not fit neatly into a sepia stereotype.

The great value of this release is that it lets us move beyond vague nostalgia and national shorthand. We can now see the young State in granular detail: who lived in each house, how many rooms they had, what language they spoke, what work they did, how many children they had, and where they came from. For anyone interested in Ireland, that is not just an archive. It is a mirror.

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