

ISSUE 63
JUNE/JULY 2026

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Fiona, Before



Fiona, After

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Liam, Before



Liam, After

5 MONTHS
49 LBS OF WEIGHT LOSS



Lina, Before



Lina, After

4 MONTHS
40 LBS OF WEIGHT LOSS



John, Before



John, After

8 MONTHS
30 LBS OF WEIGHT LOSS



Emily, Before



Emily, After

3 MONTHS
22.5 LBS OF WEIGHT LOSS



Christy, Before



Christy, After

3 YEARS
94.3 LBS OF WEIGHT LOSS



Gabriela, Before

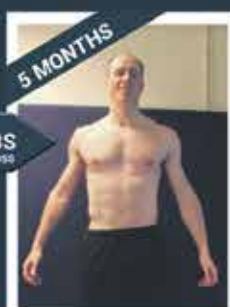


Gabriela, After

8 MONTHS
26 LBS OF WEIGHT LOSS



Tony, Before



Tony, After

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31.7 LBS OF WEIGHT LOSS



Holly, Before



Holly, After

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Summer Edition of Little Village.
Not a great summer so far, is it? We have all heard of "El Nino" and its effect on world climate. Have a look at our article here

and see for yourselves how it will effect world climate for 2026. Summer is here allegedly and so are strawberries. You have probably never heard of a strawberry sandwich but if you look at our recipe here, you might be tempted to try it out for yourselves and perhaps end up making them for friends and family.

Finally, there are two very different stories being told about Health in Ireland today. The first is the cheerful one, we are all living longer!!!! The second story is one we recognise when we try to get a GP appointment!!!! Find out more by reading our report on "Ireland's Health Check." We have lots of funny and interesting articles for you to enjoy in this edition. So, until next time...

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EL NIÑO

The Pacific weather pulse that could shape 2026

Ireland's weather normally comes at us from the Atlantic, not the Pacific. Yet every few years, a change in ocean temperatures on the far side of the world manages to disturb rainfall, crops, heatwaves and food prices across the globe. That change is called El Niño, and forecasters are watching 2026 closely.

El Niño is part of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation, or ENSO. In plain English, it is a natural swing between warmer and cooler sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific. During El Niño, the surface waters in that region become unusually warm. That extra heat alters wind patterns, shifts rainfall belts and changes the odds of drought, flooding and heat in many parts of the world. Its opposite phase is La Niña, when those waters are cooler than normal. WMO says El Niño typically occurs every two to seven years and usually lasts around nine to twelve months.

The 2026 outlook

The current expert view is that El Niño is very likely to develop during 2026. On 2 June 2026, the World Meteorological Organization said there was an 80% likelihood of El Niño during June–August 2026, with probabilities near or above 90% that it would continue until at least November. WMO says most models suggest the event will be at least moderate and possibly strong, though the peak strength and timing remain uncertain.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center had a similar outlook in its 14 May 2026 diagnostic discussion, saying El Niño was likely to emerge soon, with an 82% chance in May–July 2026, and a 96% chance of continuing through December 2026–February 2027. NOAA also warned that no strength category had more than a 37% probability, which is a useful reminder that “likely El Niño” does not yet mean “guaranteed monster El Niño”.

That distinction matters. Some headlines use phrases such as “super El Niño”, but WMO does not use that term in its standard classifications. The safer wording is: a significant El Niño is likely, a strong one is possible, and its precise strength is still uncertain.

What does it mean for Ireland?

For Ireland, El Niño is not like a storm arriving on the Atlantic chart. It does not point at Donegal, Dublin or Cork and say: “You’re next.” Its influence here is indirect,

filtered through the jet stream, Atlantic pressure systems and other climate patterns.

Met Éireann's position is cautious: El Niño has clear impacts in many regions worldwide, but its influence on Ireland and Europe is “comparatively weak, highly variable, and not robust” in the present climate. It also says there is no clear evidence of increased Irish summer warming due specifically to El Niño.

So, for Irish readers, the practical message is this: do not assume El Niño means Ireland will definitely get

Continues P.6

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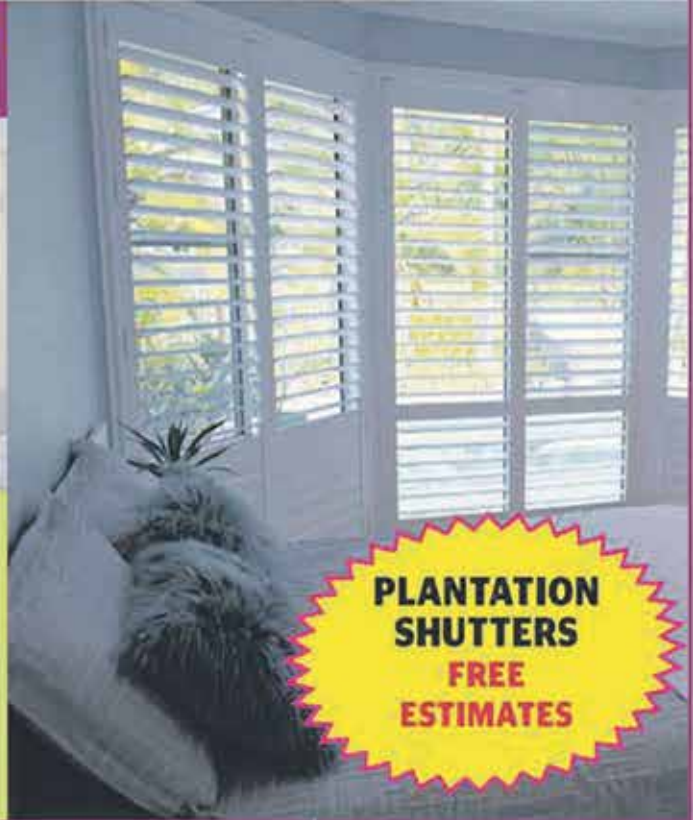
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Continued from P.4

a scorching summer, a wet autumn or a snowy winter. It may tilt the odds in some background way, but Irish weather remains dominated by the Atlantic.

Where we may feel it more clearly is through the wider world: food prices, crop yields, coffee, cocoa, rice, grain, insurance costs, humanitarian crises and global temperature records. El Niño tends to raise global average temperatures with a lag of several months, and in a warmer world the effects can be amplified because the atmosphere can hold more moisture and heat.

Who is most at risk?

The countries likely to be worst affected are those where El Niño overlaps with existing vulnerability: dependence on seasonal rains, weak water infrastructure, heat exposure, poverty or fragile food systems.

South Asia is a major concern. WMO says rainfall is likely to be below normal across much of South Asia during the June–September 2026 southwest monsoon, with above-normal temperatures also expected. Countries involved in that regional outlook include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar and the Maldives. The greatest concern is for countries where farming, drinking water and hydropower depend heavily on the monsoon.

India is especially exposed because the monsoon supplies most of the annual rainfall across large areas, and delayed or reduced rains can affect crops, reservoirs, electricity demand and food prices. Recent reporting has already highlighted concerns for India, south-east Asian rice production and Australian wheat areas as hot, dry weather combines with the expected El Niño pattern.

South-east Asia and Australia are also high-risk

areas. El Niño is commonly associated with drier, hotter conditions in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and parts of Australia, raising the risk of drought, crop losses, water shortages, wildfire and smoke pollution.

In the Greater Horn of Africa, WMO says below-normal rainfall is likely across much of the northern region during the critical June–September rainy season, particularly affecting South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, much of Eritrea, Sudan, and western and coastal Kenya. The risks there include rain-fed agriculture, water availability, livestock, hydropower, food security and public health.

In Central America, the worry is drought. UN agencies have warned that El Niño could worsen vulnerability in Central America's Dry Corridor, especially through drought and disrupted rainfall patterns. The Dry Corridor includes Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, where many rural communities depend on small-scale farming.

The Irish takeaway

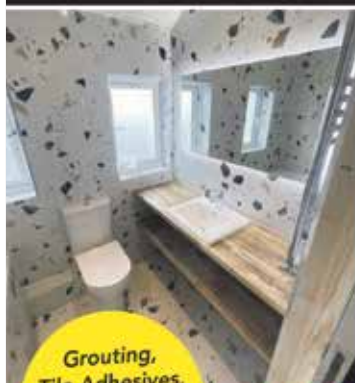
For Ireland, El Niño is less a direct weather forecast than a global warning light. It tells us that 2026 may be a year when climate extremes become more likely in already vulnerable places. We may not see the Pacific in the sky over Ireland, but we may see it in the price of rice, the cost of coffee, the pressure on humanitarian aid, and another round of record global temperatures.

The sensible Irish response is not panic. It is perspective. El Niño is natural, but it is now operating in an unnaturally warmer world. That means the same old climate swing can land harder than it once did.



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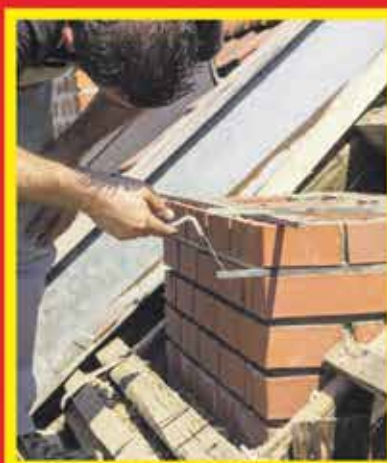
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BEYOND THE LEAVING CERT

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There are fellas in every town who never became rich, famous or important, yet everybody knows who they are.

In our town, it's Tommy on checkout six.

Tommy left school with Leaving Cert results that caused great silence at home. His mother kept staring at the paper as if more points might appear if she looked hard enough. His father simply folded it once and said, "Well, I suppose we can rule out medicine."

Back then, if college wasn't happening, life sort of carried you along. Before long, Tommy was stacking shelves in the local supermarket. Thirty-something years later, he's still there, only now he's on the checkouts, and half the town deliberately queues for him.

Not because he's fast either.

If you're in a hurry, Tommy is not your man. He scans groceries at the pace of a lad examining evidence.

"Bag of chips..." beep.

"Healthy eating gone out the window altogether."

"Wine?"

"Ah, a parent's little reward for not abandoning the family."

"Dog food?"

"Fair play. The dog's eating better than the rest of us."

The funny thing is, he never sounds like he's trying to be funny. It just falls out of him naturally, dry as old turf.

And he remembers everything.

"How's your mother after the operation?"

"Did the young lad pass the driving test?"

"Any sign of yourself going to bed before midnight, or are you still watching rubbish on Netflix?"

You could arrive at his till in shocking humour and leave smiling despite yourself.

One Friday evening, I saw a woman ahead of me clearly after having a hard day. Eyes red. Trying not to cry while unloading shopping. Tommy said nothing for ages. Just packed away quietly. Then he handed her the receipt and said, "Sure, look, if life was meant to be easy, we'd all be spoiled."

She burst out laughing.

Even old lads who claim they hate "messaging" secretly



adore him.

There's a farmer comes in every Saturday complaining about prices.

"Nearly four euros for butter now," he says.

Tommy shakes his head sadly.

"At this stage, the cows should arrive out personally and thank us."

The farmer tries not to laugh every single week and fails every single week.

Young mothers love him too because he talks to exhausted parents like survivors of a war.

One toddler having a complete meltdown once threw a banana across the conveyor belt. Tommy calmly picked it up, scanned it and said,

"Well, somebody's gone bananas altogether."

Even the child stopped roaring.

The truth is Tommy probably earns very little. He drives an old Toyota that sounds like a lawnmower climbing hills. He brings tea in a flask. His uniform is slightly too big for him, and his shoes have seen better decades.

On paper, society might say he didn't make much of himself.

But honestly, I know people with big jobs and impressive titles who wouldn't lift the mood of a room the way Tommy does, standing beside a till with a barcode scanner.

There are people who leave you drained after five minutes. Tommy somehow sends you home lighter.

And maybe that's worth more than all the Leaving Cert points in Ireland.

Because most of us won't be remembered for money or status. We'll be remembered for how we made people feel.

Tommy, without ever meaning to, became part of the reason people didn't completely lose faith in humanity while buying toilet roll and sliced pan on a wet Thursday evening.

That's not failure by any measure.

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Dublin 15 - From Village Edges to Mini-City Living



Going back in time, Dublin 15 felt like the edge of the city. For many Dubliners, Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Clonsilla, Mulhuddart and the surrounding areas were places you passed through, visited for shopping, or moved to when you wanted a bit more space. Today, Dublin 15 is no longer simply “out near Blanch.” It has become one of the most active, fast-changing and self-contained parts of the capital.

The change has not happened overnight. Fingal’s population reached 330,506 in Census 2022, making it one of the largest and fastest-growing local authority areas in the country. Dublin as a whole grew by 8% between 2016 and 2022, but Fingal has become especially associated with youth, diversity and expansion.

For residents, that growth is not an abstract statistic. It is visible every morning on the school run, in the queues on the N3, in the packed car parks, in the new apartment blocks, and in the number of cafés, gyms, barbers, restaurants

Continues P.12

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and childcare facilities that now seem to appear wherever there is a gap in a parade of shops.

Dublin 15 has become a place where people can live much of their lives without heading into the city centre at all. The Blanchardstown Centre remains the obvious symbol of that change. It is not just a shopping centre. For many families, teenagers, couples and older residents, it is the unofficial town square: a place to meet, eat, walk around, go to the cinema, buy school shoes, get a phone fixed, have coffee, or simply escape the rain.

But the story of Dublin 15 is bigger than retail. Castleknock still carries the feel of an old village. Clonsilla has its own identity, shaped by railway links, schools, older estates and newer developments. Ongar and Tyrrelstown tell the story of modern suburban growth, with young families, new communities and a far more diverse population than would have been imagined a generation ago. Mulhuddart, Corduff and Huntstown have long-established communities with deep local roots, even as the area around them continues to change.

That mix of old and new is one of Dublin 15's most interesting features. Fingal's heritage records remind us that the area's history goes back long before shopping centres and business parks. The manor of Castleknock was granted to Hugh Tyrell in 1177, and old townland names such as Blanchardstown, Tyrellstown and Diswellstown still carry traces of earlier Anglo-Norman families and settlements.

This creates a tension familiar to many growing suburbs. People want better homes, better roads, better public transport, more schools, more restaurants and more facilities. But they also want to preserve a sense of place. Nobody wants to live in an anonymous sprawl where every junction has the same takeaway, the same traffic lights and the same feeling of being half-finished.

The Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029 sets out the official framework for how the county is expected to grow, with housing, transport, employment and public amenities all part of the planning conversation. The plan came into effect in April 2023 and is intended to guide development across Fingal over the coming years.

For Dublin 15 residents, the key question is whether infrastructure can keep pace with population. New houses are welcome, especially for younger families trying to stay near parents, schools and work. But new homes also mean more cars, more pressure on GP services, more school places needed, more sports facilities required and more demand on public transport.

The commute remains one of the defining features of life in D15. The area is well connected in many ways, with rail, bus routes and access to the M50 and N3. Yet anyone who has sat in traffic near Blanchardstown, tried to cross from one side of the area to the other at rush hour, or planned a school drop-off with military precision knows that connectivity on a map is not always the same as convenience in real life.

Still, there is a strong argument that Dublin 15 is coming into its own. It has major shopping, strong schools, sports clubs, parks, restaurants, hotels, hospitals nearby, business parks, and access to both city and countryside. St Catherine's Park, the Royal Canal, Porterstown Park and Tolka Valley Park offer green space that many more central parts of Dublin would envy.

There is also a noticeable confidence in the area. Dublin 15 is no longer apologising for being "not quite town." It has its own rhythm. It has families who have been there for generations, and families who arrived last year. It has people who remember fields where there are now estates, and younger residents who know no other version of the place.

Of course, growth brings irritation. Residents can reasonably complain about traffic, overdevelopment, pressure on services and the loss of quieter local character. But there is also something lively about a place still forming itself. Dublin 15 is not frozen in nostalgia. It is messy, busy, sometimes frustrating, but undeniably alive.

Perhaps that is the real story. Dublin 15 has moved from the edge of Dublin life to somewhere much closer to the centre of modern suburban Ireland. It is no longer just a collection of estates and villages beside a shopping centre. It is becoming a mini-city in its own right — with all the opportunity, pressure, convenience and argument that comes with it.

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These new additions two Irish branches double the company's footprint in the Island of Ireland – with existing branches on Dublin's exclusive Burlington Road and Belfast. This brings the number of branches for the group to 15 across Ireland, the UK and Spain.

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Dear Resident

I hope you are keeping well. I have included below an update on some 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



Attending the Commemoration of the genocide in Srebrenica hosted by the Bosnia Herzegovina Association of Ireland with Cllr Mary McCamley and Luke Daly

CRISIS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN DUBLIN 15

The report of the newly published Task Force on Special Education in Dublin 15 must be implemented in full to ensure equal opportunity for children with additional needs.

Councillors agreed a motion proposed by Cllr Mary McCamley and I at our area committee on 4th June, calling on Government Ministers to allocate the necessary resources to implement urgently the recommendations of the Task Force, including:

- Approval for a second special school in Dublin 15.
- Creation of two new Children's Disability Networks Teams (CDNTs) to overcome lengthy waiting lists for our existing CDNTs in Blakestown and Blanchardstown, where 40% of children referred to the CDNTs are placed on waiting lists.

This is a progressive report which reflects the courageous advocacy and dedication of parents in Autism Dublin 15 over a seven-year period. The report gives a roadmap for equal opportunity not only in Dublin 15 but nationally. The Government has a moral obligation to deliver its recommendations without more delay.

Motion: "That this Committee urges the Government to provide the necessary resources to deliver in full, and as a matter of urgency, all the recommendations of the report of the Task Force on Special Education in Dublin 15 and resolve the crisis facing children with additional needs in Dublin 15."

N3 BUS PRIORITY PROJECT – BRAMBLEFIELDS BRIDGE

Fingal Council recently confirmed to me an estimated cost of €5.5 million for a proposed active travel bridge from the Maxol garage, Damastown to Bramblefield Park, which is part of the N3 bus priority and active travel project. 334 submissions were made to the public consultation on the N3 project and almost all expressed opposition to the bridge.

The overall N3 project, which is beneficial for public transport and active travel, should go ahead, but the proposed bridge is unnecessary to the overall project, destructive of the local environment in Bramblefield and damaging to community safety. The bridge should be removed from the N3 project in line with a cross-party motion approved by Councillors in Dublin 15.



Labour



NEW PATHWAY CONSTRUCTED FOR CASTLEKNOCK GREEN

Fingal Council recently completed an upgrade project for Castleknock Green, involving installation of a looped pathway around the boundary of the green with links to existing footpaths. Four new benches were installed along the new path on the green and an existing bench was reinstated on a hard standing area adjacent to the path.

A new uncontrolled pedestrian crossing consisting of a dished kerb with tactile paving is being installed to the southeast of the open space on the street leading into Deerpark. Thanks to Fingal Operations team and all the residents who participated in the public consultation.

KELLYSTOWN CEMETERY TO BE COMPLETED IN Q3 2026

I recently received the following response from Fingal Council to a question which I submitted regarding the completion of Kellystown cemetery:

The development of Kellystown Cemetery is ongoing following commencement of site works in Q1 2025. Work is currently well advanced on site with good progress on grave layouts, pathways and buildings. Commissioning of the services to the cemetery and buildings is pending outstanding utility connections.

The construction works have been phased to allow shared construction access to a neighbouring residential development site. Safe access to the site is curtailed pending completion of works on the permanent access road shared with the adjoining ongoing development with works currently scheduled for completion in September. Based on these restrictions it is anticipated that the cemetery will be fully operational in Q3 this year.

This current phase of development works will when complete provide approx. 650 grave plots, structures for the storage of ashes including columbarium walls and memorial plots, a small services building, a car park, site infrastructure and landscaping.

Working with Cllr Mary McCamley and Luke Daly

This is a Political Communication on behalf of Cllr John Walsh, Dublin West Labour Party in the form of an advertisement. Visit www.labour.ie/transparency for more information.



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efficiently without clogging up. Perhaps most importantly, you'll notice the difference in daily life: no more scrubbing stubborn limescale off shower screens, no more chalky residue on glassware, and noticeably softer-feeling water that's gentler on your skin. By preserving the water's natural mineral content, your water retains its healthy profile without the slippery, salty feel of traditional softened water.

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But a great product is only as good as its installation and the promise behind it. Even the best DPSE system requires proper placement, usually on the main incoming water line, to effectively protect your entire home. You shouldn't have to worry about a botched installation or a system that isn't performing. This is where a reliable plumbing service makes all the difference. A 100% job guarantee isn't just a slogan; it's the peace of mind that a partner is standing behind every fitting and every connection.

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PAINT LIKE A PRO How to Paint a Room

By Mick Gilbride | Dublin Area Manager, Pat McDonnell Paints

With a little know-how, the right tools, and relatively little expense, you can transform any room in your home!

Step 1: Plan

Do your future self a favour by taking time at the outset to plan your project and gather all necessary materials. This will save you from repeat store visits for something you could have sworn was in the shed. Measuring the room ensures you get the right amount of interior emulsion from the get-go.

Once you're ready to select your paint, be sure to opt for premium quality paint. High-quality paint is an investment that offers superior durability and coverage – ultimately saving you time and money.

If you're unsure which colour to choose for your room, why not book a one-to-one consultation with one of our experts? They'll offer personalised advice on colour schemes that suit your taste and the style of your home. To arrange your consultation, simply call your local Pat McDonnell Paints branch today!

Step 2: Prep

Protect surfaces you don't want to paint. Move furniture, lay dust sheets, and mask off any fittings, doors, window frames and skirting.

Cleaning is an essential step to ensuring a blemish-free finish. Use sugar soap solution to spot-clean any dirt, grime, and dust. Make sure to leave the wall dry fully before painting.

Step 3: Fix

Scrape away any loose paint, then sand this area lightly in a circular motion with fine-grade sandpaper.

Apply a good quality filler to fix any imperfections (e.g., holes, cracks, scratches, dents). Smooth the filler out with a filler knife, allow it to dry, sand it back, and wipe away any dust.



Step 4: Paint

Cutting-in with a 2" brush covers any tight corners and edges that your roller can't reach.

Tip: To ensure there is no overlap when the cutting-in areas dry (aka "picture framing"), paint one wall at a time and roll before your cutting-in has had the chance to dry.

When loading your brush with paint, dip the first inch of the brush and gently tap against the rim of the paint tin to remove excess paint. Check for drips as you go as these are easier to remove when still wet.

Roll the remaining areas. For a smooth application, dampen the roller before you start and don't overload it. Roll in a 'W' pattern at a moderate pace using light pressure. To fix drips or pressure lines as you go, lightly roll over the area while the paint is still wet.

Check the manufacturer's instructions to see how much drying time is needed before painting a second coat.

Remove masking tape. To prevent peeling, do this before the paint is fully dry.

Step 5: Clean-up

Seal and store any unused paint so you can use it again for touch-ups. Wash your tools with warm, soapy water. If cared for properly, good-quality tools can be used again and again.

Tools for the Job:

- Measuring Tape
- Sugar Soap
- Microfibre Cloth
- Dust Sheets
- Deltec Gold Masking Tape
- Fine-Grade Sandpaper
- Prestonett Ready-Mix Interior/Exterior Filler & Filling Knife
- Wooster Silver Tip 2" Angle Sash Brush
- 9" ALLPRO Roller Set (Includes Sleeve, Frame & Tray)
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Is Dublin becoming more dangerous

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



The honest answer is: Dublin is not getting more dangerous across the board, but parts of Dublin — especially the city centre — can feel more threatening because visible disorder and some street-crime categories are up.

The facts are mixed.

In the Dublin Metropolitan Region, CSO recorded crime figures for the 12 months to Q4 2025 show several serious categories falling compared with the previous year: homicide-related offences fell from 22 to 17, robbery/extortion/hijacking fell from 1,404 to 1,198, sexual offences fell from 1,232 to 1,117, theft fell from 38,794 to 37,724, and damage to property fell from 9,250 to 8,463.

But other categories in Dublin rose: assaults/threats/harassment rose from 8,589 to 8,853, controlled drug offences rose from 6,549 to 6,862, weapons/explosives offences rose from 1,339 to 1,441, and public order/social-code offences rose from 11,632 to 12,637. Burglary was effectively flat, rising slightly from 3,780 to 3,788.

So, the headline is not “Dublin is spiralling into danger.” It is more precise to say: serious recorded crime is down in several key areas, but public order, drugs, weapons and assault-related incidents are up. That explains why many people's lived experience feels worse even where some major crime categories are falling.

Nationally, the 2025 CSO figures also show recorded crime falling in most offence groups, including homicide-related offences down 25%, burglary down 13%, robbery/extortion/hijacking down 11%, and sexual offences down 9%. The main national increase was weapons/explosives offences, up 6%.

Perception is a separate issue, and it matters. A Dublin City Council “Your Dublin, Your Voice” night-time economy survey in March 2025 found that 64% felt safe in the city centre during the day, but only 33% felt safe at night. That daytime figure had slipped from 68% in December 2024, while the night-time figure fell from 35% to 33%.

A separate Dublin Inquirer/Amarách survey of 600 people found a much sharper perception problem: among people living outside the city centre who visit it, only 42% felt safe walking alone in the city centre during the day, falling to 20% after dark. It also found that 70% believed crime had increased in the city centre in the previous year, and 63% had avoided visiting because they felt it was too unsafe.

That does not prove Dublin is statistically more dangerous overall. It does show that the city centre has a serious confidence problem. Open drug use, aggressive begging, groups drinking on the street, fighting, intimidation, and visible antisocial behaviour can

make people feel unsafe even if they are not personally attacked or robbed.

There are also limits to the figures. CSO recorded crime is based on incidents reported to and recorded by Gardaí; it uses the date reported, not necessarily the date the offence happened. Fraud figures also need caution because some financial-institution referrals are excluded from the current CSO series.

My reading of the facts is this: Dublin is not generally becoming more dangerous in a simple statistical sense, but the public realm in parts of the city centre has become rougher, more disorderly and less comfortable for many people. That is why both things can be true: the official numbers can show reductions in robbery and theft, while ordinary people still feel less safe walking through parts of town, especially after dark. Perhaps, because the crime that did not affect them, or that they could protect themselves against, is replaced by crime that can attack at random.



THERE IS A SOLUTION GROUP

Alcoholics Anonymous Corduff D15

Our Group meets every Saturday morning at 11am in the
St Patrick's Pastoral Centre, Blackcourt Road, Corduff
Eircode: D15VY8P

and simultaneously online on:

Zoom Meeting ID: 83297097884

Passcode: 478993

- 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.
- It is Non-Professional, Self-Supporting, Multiracial, Apolitical and available almost everywhere.
- There are no Age or Educational requirements, membership is OPEN to ANYONE who wants to do something about their drinking problem!



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Email Clutter

The Cupboard Under the Stairs of Modern Life

Remember when post arrived through the letterbox, landed on the mat, and was dealt with in a civilised manner. Bills went on the mantelpiece. Wedding invitations were displayed proudly. Junk mail went straight into the bin, unless it contained a picture of a pizza, in which case it was studied with the seriousness of a Leaving Cert paper.

Then email arrived and promised to make life easier.

That, we now know, was a trap.

Today, many of us have inboxes containing 12,000, 25,000, even 50,000 emails. Some people have so many unread messages that the little red number beside the mail app looks less like a notification and more like the national debt. We don't open them. We don't delete them. We just allow them to accumulate, like plastic tubs without lids.

The trouble began innocently enough. We gave our email address to a hotel for a booking. Then to a supermarket for loyalty points. Then to a garden centre for 10% off a bird feeder. Before long, everyone wanted to be part of our "email journey". Airlines, charities, pharmacies, estate agents, dentists, delivery companies, and one mysterious shoe shop we visited once in 2017 all began writing to us as if we had shared a deep emotional bond.

The real villain, of course, is the phrase: "Sign up to receive updates."

Updates? On what? A kettle? A pair of socks? A

lawnmower blade? Yet we sign up because there is usually a discount involved. We are not weak people, but we are not made of stone. Ten per cent off is ten per cent off.

And so the inbox fills.

There are emails from companies we no longer remember, about products we no longer own, sent to an address we no longer admit to using. There are newsletters we meant to read "later", delivery notifications for parcels that arrived three Christmases ago, and emails marked "Important" by people who have a very relaxed understanding of importance.

Worse still, we dare not delete anything.

Somewhere in those 35,000 emails might be the warranty for the dishwasher, the receipt for the hotel in Galway, or the email from Revenue that will one day save us from prison. So we keep everything, just in case. This is how a practical storage system becomes an emotional support animal.

The Unopened Email: A Modern Shame

Unread emails are especially humiliating. They sit there accusingly. Some are harmless. Some are expired offers. Some are newsletters with headlines like "You won't believe what happened next," and we can confirm, after six years of not opening them, that we still don't.

But the inbox is clever. It gives the illusion of control. We star things. We flag things. We create folders called "To Do", "Important", "Important 2",

Continues P.24



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.

DART+ West Planned Disruptions

Irish Rail has confirmed that disruptions related to the DART+ West project will primarily take place during weekends or over holiday periods such as Christmas. I was pleased to hear that bus replacement services will be put in place during these disruption periods, and that they have put in place a small dedicated team to liaise with the Metrolink project and minimise the impacts their construction will have on commuters.

They shared that they expect DART+ West construction to begin in 2028, with the rail service fully operational by the end of 2032.



Getting to the Bottom of Unplugged RTI Monitors



When Real-Time Information monitors were put into place, they were hooked into the public lighting network. Since then, a rule has been put in place to say that's not allowed. Stops now have to apply for a new connection on the general electricity network, which is turning into a bureaucratic, expensive headache. I'm working on this issue to reduce this red tape and to get our RTI monitors reconnected.



I recently completed the [Castleknock 5km](#) (just about!) and really enjoyed the Castleknock Village Festival.



Fighting for Affordable Energy and Limiting Data Centre Expansion

I recently proposed a motion calling on the Government to re-commit to its own emissions targets and deliver lower-cost energy for all. Unfortunately, the Government is now promoting the expansion of data centres without any clear guardrails around their use of energy, resulting in strains on our electricity supply and households paying more on their own electricity bills. We must pause new data centre developments and make sure the tech companies are paying their fair share going forward. Renewable energy benefits should be felt by people, not tech giants.

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

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and “Sort Out Later”. “Sort Out Later” is where emails go to die.

The truly organised among us create labels and filters. The rest of us rely on the search bar and prayer.

So What Can Be Done?

The good news is that help exists. The bad news is that it requires us to admit the problem is not the emails. It is us.

Gmail now has a **Manage Subscriptions** feature that shows active subscriptions and lets users unsubscribe from frequent senders more easily; Google says it can sort senders by how often they have emailed recently and offers an unsubscribe option from that view.

Outlook has tools such as **Sweep, Archive, Move to**, and automatic filtering, which can be used to clear recurring messages and organise the inbox without manually attacking every email like a man emptying a shed before a house move.

Apple users can use **Hide My Email**, part of iCloud+, to create random email addresses that forward to their real inbox. This is useful when signing up for shops, apps, and services, because the address can later be deactivated if it starts attracting too much digital confetti.

There are also paid inbox-cleaning tools that identify newsletters and bulk unsubscribe from them. These can be useful, but caution is needed: any service that cleans your inbox may need access to your email account. That means you should check who runs it, what permissions it asks for, and whether you trust it more than you trust yourself after two glasses of wine and a “delete all” button.

The Nuclear Option

Some people declare “email bankruptcy”. This involves archiving everything older than a certain date and starting again.

It sounds reckless, but it has a certain appeal. After all, if an email from 2019 was truly important, surely someone would have followed up by now. Unless, of course, it was the one containing the dishwasher warranty.

A less dramatic version is to create three simple folders: Action, Keep, and Receipts. Everything else should be archived or deleted. Not seventeen folders. Not a folder for every possible human activity. Three. We are managing email, not cataloguing the Book of Kells.

Inbox Zero, But Without the Martyrdom

The famous “Inbox Zero” idea is often misunderstood. Its originator, Merlin Mann, has argued that the “zero” is not really about obsessively having no emails sitting in your inbox, but about reducing the mental hold your inbox has over you.

This is comforting, because most of us will never reach zero. We might get to 14,000 and feel heroic. Then the next morning Ryanair, the chemist, the broadband provider and a hotel in Kerry will all have written to us before breakfast.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is to stop email behaving like a second job.

A Sensible Irish System

Here is a realistic approach :

First, unsubscribe from the worst offenders. Not all of them. Just the noisy ones. If a company emails you five times a week and you haven’t bought from them since lockdown, let them go.

Second, use search terms like “unsubscribe”, “receipt”, “invoice”, “booking”, and “delivery” to separate useful emails from marketing sludge.

Third, archive old emails instead of trying to manually sort the entire past. Archiving removes them from view but keeps them searchable. This is ideal for people who want a clean inbox but still fear deleting the one email that proves they paid for a toaster.

Fourth, create a separate email address for online shopping. This is the digital equivalent of keeping muddy boots at the back door.

Finally, stop signing up for everything. The next time a website offers 10% off in exchange for your email address, pause and ask yourself: “Do I want a discount, or do I want a lifelong relationship with a company that sells garden cushions?”

Admittedly, the answer may still be “discount”.

The Inbox as a Biography

Our inboxes are messy because our lives are messy. They contain holidays, bills, schools, doctors, car insurance, forgotten hobbies, abandoned diets, loyalty cards, and offers on things we briefly thought would improve us. An inbox with 40,000 emails is not a failure. It is an accidental autobiography.

Still, every autobiography needs editing. Otherwise, by the time we finally look for the important message, it will be buried between “Last Chance Sale Ends Tonight” and “We Miss You”.

And they don’t miss us.

They miss our data.

From Castleknock Classrooms to GAA Pitches: Ecoplex Energy Solar is Transforming Dublin 15

There's something quietly revolutionary happening across Dublin 15 and it's happening one rooftop at a time.



Ecoplex Launch at Castleknock National School

(left to right) Eimear Carbone Mangan, Roderico O'Gorman, Richard Sheridan (CSO at Ecoplex), Principal Sandra Moloney, Minister Jack Chambers, Emer Currie and Seamus Tighe (CEO at Ecoplex)



Minister Jack Chambers meets students at Castleknock National School

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Local renewable energy company Ecoplex Energy has been at the heart of a growing solar movement in our community, helping schools, sports clubs, businesses and homeowners harness the power of the sun. With over 12,000+ installations completed nationwide, the Dublin 15-based team has firmly established itself as a trusted name in clean energy, providing Solar PV systems, EV chargers and home insulation solutions, with a fully in-house team managing everything from design and installation to grant assistance and ongoing support. Their work right here on our doorstep tells the story best.

One of their most celebrated recent projects was the installation of a full solar PV system at Castleknock National School. In a wonderful show of community spirit, Ecoplex Energy not only designed and installed the system but donated an additional eight solar panels free of charge,

maximising the school's ability to generate clean electricity and cut energy costs for years to come. The project was supported through the Microsoft-funded ChangeX programme, and the launch day was a proper occasion, with Minister Jack Chambers and local representatives joining pupils, teachers, and parents to mark the milestone. The children even put on a musical welcome and walked away with a real-world lesson in renewable energy that no textbook could match.

It doesn't stop at the school gates. Castleknock GAA Club has also embraced solar as part of its 'Greening of Somerton' initiative, with Ecoplex Energy installing panels that are helping power one of the community's most beloved venues more sustainably. Add to that a rising number of homes and businesses throughout the area making the switch, and it's clear that Dublin 15 is fast becoming a model for community-led renewable energy.

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Fashion Victim

By an elderly bloke

Like every young person, I was once interested in fashion. I know that is hard to imagine now, when my big decision is whether the jumper with the small stain is still acceptable for going to the shop.

But in the late 1960s, I cared.

Unfortunately, caring did not mean I looked good.

This was the era of flares, hipster trousers and pink crewneck tops. I had them all. I probably thought I looked like Steve McQueen. In truth, I looked like someone who had lost a bet in a boutique.

The trousers sat dangerously low, the flares flapped about in the wind, and the pink top announced to the world that I was a young man prepared to make a fool of himself in public.

So, I have no right to laugh at what young people wear today. I did my time. There may still be photographs hidden somewhere, and if there are, they should be burned before the grandchildren find them.

I had an uncle I was very fond of who managed Wrangler jeans in Ireland. This made him, in my young mind, a man at the very heart of fashion. One day, full of confidence and ignorance, I told him what young people wanted.

He looked at me calmly and said, "You'll wear whatever we tell you to wear."

At the time, I thought this was an insult to youth, freedom, rebellion and possibly my pink jumper.

Years later, I realised he was dead right.

Fashion is not about choice. It is about surrender.

First, we laugh at something. Then we say, "I suppose it's all right on some people." Then it appears in the shops. Then someone buys it for us. Then, before we know where we are, we are wearing the very thing we swore would never touch our bodies.

We had skinny jeans for a while. I never trusted them. They looked painful. Young men walked about in them as if their legs had been shrink-wrapped. I admired their courage but feared for their circulation.

Now, baggy trousers are back. They don't call



them flares, of course. That would expose the whole racket. They call them wide-leg, relaxed fit or some other nonsense. But I know a flare when I see one. I wore them when they could take the skin off your ankles in a crosswind.

The great thing about men is that we resist fashion longer. Not because we are clever, but because we are lazy. We find something that fits, and we stick with it until a woman intervenes.

Every man knows the moment.

You come downstairs thinking you look grand.

Your wife or partner looks up and says, "You're not wearing that?"

And just like that, the outfit is dead.

You may argue. You may say the jeans are perfectly good. You may point out that they still have years left in them. You may even mention that they were expensive.

This will not help.

"They're awful," she says.

And back upstairs you go, a broken man carrying

trousers from 2008.

The older you get, the more difficult it becomes. You don't want to look like you have given up, but you don't want to look like you are trying to get into a nightclub either. There is no sadder sight than an older man dressed head to toe like someone his grandson follows on TikTok.

The answer, I think, is to aim for harmless. Decent jeans. Plain jumper. Good shoes. Nothing ripped. Nothing shiny. Nothing with a slogan. And never, under any circumstances, anything described as "edgy."

Fashion will keep going round in circles. Skinny will become baggy. Baggy will become flares. Flares will come back under a new name. Young people will think they invented it all.

And we will say nothing.

Because somewhere, in an old biscuit tin or photo album, there may still be evidence of the pink crewneck top.

And none of us can afford to be too smug.

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The Blanchardstown Centre Effect

Do We Still Shop, Meet and Socialise the Same Way?



There are shopping centres, and then there is Blanchardstown Centre. For Dublin 15, it is not simply somewhere to buy a pair of shoes, pick up the weekly essentials or wander around on a wet Saturday. It has become something much bigger: a meeting place, a landmark, a teenage rite of passage, a family fallback plan and, in many ways, the unofficial town square of modern D15.

Ask someone where they are going in Dublin 15 and the answer may simply be, “I’m heading over to Blanch.” No further explanation is needed. It could mean shopping, lunch, the cinema, a coffee, a birthday present panic-buy, a phone repair, school shoes, a haircut, a child’s party, or just a walk around when the weather is miserable and nobody can face another afternoon at home.

That is the real Blanchardstown Centre effect. It changed not only where people shop, but how people use their local area.

The scale alone explains part of it. Blanchardstown Centre describes itself as a major retail and leisure destination with 180 stores, three retail parks and 7,000 free car parking spaces. Fingal County Council’s own directory describes it as offering more than 180 stores, three retail parks and 25 restaurants, located on the N3 near M50 exit 6.

But numbers do not capture the emotional geography of the place. For many families in Dublin 15, Blanchardstown Centre has been woven into ordinary life. Children remember trips to the toy shops. Teenagers remember their first independent wander around with friends, trying to look casual while spending most of their money on food. Parents remember the exhausting ritual of buying uniforms, runners, coats, presents and last-minute items for school projects that were somehow only mentioned at 8 o’clock the night before.

For older residents, the centre may still feel like the symbol of a changed Dublin 15. Once, social life was more village-based. Castleknock, Clonsilla, Blanchardstown village, Mulhuddart and surrounding areas each had their own rhythm. People went to local shops, local pubs, local churches, local clubs and neighbours’ houses. The arrival and growth of a huge retail hub pulled much of that casual activity into one place.

That has advantages. On a practical level, Blanchardstown Centre works because it solves problems. You can park, shop, eat, meet friends, bring children indoors, go to the cinema and do several errands in one visit. ODEON Blanchardstown is located at the centre and lists nine cinema screens, including IMAX, iSense and RealD 3D options.

The result is that the centre is not just retail infrastructure. It is social infrastructure. It gives people somewhere to go when there is no particular plan. This matters more than we often admit. Modern suburban life can be strangely isolated. People may live close together but rarely meet unless there is a school, club, café or public space that naturally pulls them into contact. Blanchardstown Centre does that, even if the contact is sometimes no more profound than bumping into someone near

Marks & Spencer and pretending you are not in a rush.

Of course, the centre has also changed expectations. Once people went “into town” for bigger shopping trips. Now, for many in Dublin 15, town is optional. Why battle city-centre traffic, parking charges or crowded streets when so much is available locally? Dublin city centre still has its culture, history and energy, but Blanchardstown Centre has removed the automatic need to travel there for many everyday purchases and outings.

There is a downside to that convenience. When a shopping centre becomes the main public square, social life becomes tied to consumption. Meeting a friend often means buying coffee. Taking children somewhere often means spending money. Even a casual wander can become a small financial ambush involving snacks, parking patience, a new charger, a bubble tea and something nobody knew they needed until they saw it in a window.

There is also the question of atmosphere. Traditional town centres develop slowly. They have odd corners, independent shops, older buildings, benches, churches, pubs, local characters and a sense of accumulated history. Shopping centres are more controlled environments. They are clean, convenient and weatherproof, but they are also commercial spaces. You can meet there, but you are meeting inside a business model.

That is why the future of Dublin 15 should not depend on the centre alone. Fingal’s Development Plan 2023–2029 talks about supporting “vibrant socially and economically successful urban settlements” across the county. That kind of planning language may sound dry, but for residents it raises a very real question: can Dublin 15 grow into a place with several strong local hearts, rather than one giant magnet pulling everyone towards Blanchardstown Centre?

The best version of Dublin 15 would have both. It would keep the convenience and energy of the centre, while also strengthening village streets, parks, libraries, sports clubs, cafés, markets, arts venues and walkable neighbourhood spaces. Blanchardstown Centre can be the big gathering point, but it should not be the only place where local life happens.

Still, it would be unfair to dismiss what the centre has given the area. It has provided jobs, convenience, entertainment and a shared reference point. It has helped make Dublin 15 feel less like a suburb dependent on the city centre and more like a district with its own gravity.

The test now is whether Dublin 15 can build around that success without becoming defined solely by it. People need shops, but they also need streets. They need restaurants, but they also need parks. They need somewhere to buy things, but they also need places to belong.

Blanchardstown Centre has changed how Dublin 15 shops, meets and socialises. The next challenge is making sure the wider area offers the same sense of life, choice and connection once people step outside its doors.

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The Áras

The House in the Park That Dubliners Think They Know

Most Dubliners know the Phoenix Park in their own way. For some, it is the place for a Sunday walk, a trip to the Zoo, a cycle that seemed like a good idea at the time, or a slow drive behind someone admiring the deer. For others, it is the great escape valve of the city: 1,752 acres of trees, grass, monuments, memories and traffic confusion.

And then there is the big white house behind the gates.

Áras an Uachtaráin sits there with quiet dignity, familiar and mysterious at the same time. We know it as the President's residence, of course. We see it on the news when visiting dignitaries arrive, when the Council of State is summoned, or when a new Taoiseach makes the trip up the avenue. But for many Dubliners, it remains one of those places we pass often and know only vaguely.

That is a pity, because the Áras is not just a fine house in a fine park. It is a compact history of Ireland itself.

The Phoenix Park began in the 1660s as a royal hunting park and was opened to the public in 1747. Today it is one of the largest enclosed public parks in any European capital city, and still has its famous herd of wild fallow deer. It is hard to think of another capital city where so much nature, politics, history, dog-walking and bad parking coexist so comfortably.

The Áras itself began life in 1751, not as a presidential palace, but as a house for the Phoenix Park ranger, Nathaniel Clements. This is one of the lovely surprises of the place. It did not start with fanfare and flags. It began as a substantial but relatively private residence in the park. Later, in 1782, it was bought for use by the Viceroy, the representatives of British rule in Ireland. Clements was paid £25,000 for it, which was a vast sum at the time.

From there, the building became one of the great symbols of authority in Ireland. For more than a century, this was where the Viceroy lived, entertained and presided over official life. Long before television cameras captured presidents greeting guests on the steps, the house was part of the machinery of British administration.

That gives the Áras its strange emotional weight. It is elegant, graceful and beautiful, but it has lived several lives. It has been a ranger's house, a colonial residence, the

home of the Governor-General of the Irish Free State, and finally the official residence of the President of Ireland.

In 1938, Douglas Hyde, the first President of Ireland, moved in. Every Irish president since has followed him. A house once associated with British power became the home of the Irish presidency. That is the kind of historical turn that Ireland specialises in: complicated, symbolic and never quite tidy.

The building itself grew as its importance grew. Formal gardens were added in the 1840s. An East Wing was built for Queen Victoria's visit in 1849. Gas lighting arrived in 1852, electricity in 1908, and the West Wing was extended

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For the first time the Castleknock Village Festival was a two day event. In addition to the Sunday 5k Run and street festival, a number of events took place on Saturday. These included dog show, a historical walk along the canal, and a concert in the st Brigids Church in Castleknock.

Thank you to all participants who made it such a great occasion, especially our sponsors Castleknock Hotel, Cooper Face Jacks, Myos Pub and Brady's Garage. Ted Leddy
Chairman Castleknock Village Festival Committee



We also unveiled a plaque and tree in memory of members of the community who passed away during the Covid pandemic.

for the visit of King George V in 1911. In other words, the Áras is not frozen in one period. It is a house that has been adapted, added to and reshaped by politics, fashion and necessity.

There is also the famous White House connection. It is often said that James Hoban, the Irish-born architect of the White House in Washington, may have been influenced by the garden-front portico of the Áras. As with many good historical claims, it should be treated carefully rather than swallowed whole, but it is a pleasing thought: that a Dublin house in the Phoenix Park may have helped inspire one of the most famous buildings in the world.

What makes the Áras special, though, is not just its architecture or its political role. It is its setting. Other countries put presidential palaces behind layers of ceremony and distance. Ours sits in a public park where children eat 99s, runners check their watches, and people argue about whether they should have taken the Castleknock gate instead.

That closeness matters. The Áras is grand, but it is not remote. It is formal, but not untouchable. It belongs to the State, but it also belongs emotionally to Dubliners. It is part of the scenery of ordinary life.

The irony is that many visitors to Dublin know more about it than locals do. Tourists seek it out. School groups are told its story. But plenty of Dublin people could spend a lifetime using the Phoenix Park and never take the tour, never stand inside the rooms, never think about how much history is

contained behind those gates.

Tours are available on Saturdays, with free tickets issued from the Phoenix Park Visitor Centre on the day on a first-come, first-served basis. The arrangements can be cancelled at short notice because it is, after all, a working State residence. That seems fair enough. If the President has a delegation arriving, your historical curiosity may have to wait.

Still, it is worth doing. Not because the Áras is some hidden secret — it is hiding in plain sight — but because it changes how you see the park. The next time you pass those gates, you are no longer just looking at a big official house. You are looking at a place that has watched Ireland change from colony to Free State to republic.

Dublin is full of these places. We pass them every day and only half-see them. A wall, a gate, a statue, a bridge, a name on a street sign. The Áras is one of the best examples: familiar enough to ignore, important enough to deserve a second look.

So, the next time you are in the Phoenix Park, slow down for a moment. Not too much, obviously, or the car behind you will let you know. Look past the gates and remember that this house has seen Viceroy, Governors-General, Presidents, monarchs, diplomats, schoolchildren, gardeners, soldiers, servants, journalists, and probably more than a few confused visitors trying to find the Zoo.

It is more than the President's house.

It is Dublin's house in the park.

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There are many competitive sports in Ireland. Gaelic football. Hurling. Rugby. Horse racing. Arguing about planning permission.

But none of them compares to the school run.

The school run is where ordinary decent people, who would normally hold a door open for a stranger, become tactical road warriors before 9am. It is a daily contest of nerve, patience, positioning, snack management, and the ability to reverse a seven-seater into a space that does not technically exist.

In D15, as in every growing Irish area, the school run has become less of a journey and more of a military operation. It begins with good intentions and ends with someone shouting, "Where is your other shoe?"

The morning begins badly

The school run does not begin in the car. That is a common mistake made by people without children.

It begins in the kitchen, where a parent tries to create breakfast, lunch, emotional stability and a functioning timetable, all while someone is looking for a PE top that was definitely "just there yesterday".

At 7.55am, there is hope.

At 8.10am, there is tension.

At 8.23am, there is screaming.

Nobody knows why children are surprised by school. It happens five days a week. It has happened since September. Yet every morning they react as though the concept has just been sprung on them by a cruel state.

"Get your bag."

"What bag?"

"Your school bag."

"Where is it?"

"Where did you leave it?"

"I don't know."

This is not a conversation. It is a hostage negotiation.

Then comes the lunchbox revelation. The child who declared last night that they loved ham now finds ham disgusting. The banana is too brown. The apple is too appley. The yoghurt is the wrong yoghurt. The sandwich

has been cut in triangles, which was acceptable yesterday but is now a personal insult.

Meanwhile, one parent is trying to remember if today is swimming, music, Irish dancing, football, science project day, non-uniform day, or the mysterious "bring in something from nature" day, which usually ends with a child producing a damp leaf from the footwell.

The driveway sprint

Eventually, everyone reaches the car, though never at the same time.

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One child has forgotten their coat. One has forgotten their homework. One has brought a toy they are not allowed to bring. One is crying because someone looked at them. The parent, already mentally exhausted, starts the engine with the haunted expression of a person heading into battle.

And then you meet the traffic.

D15 was once a place where roads seemed to make sense. Then everyone had children, cars got bigger, schoolbags got heavier, and housing estates multiplied. Roads that once carried bicycles, Escorts and the occasional van are now expected to handle SUVs, delivery drivers, buses, electric scooters, grandparents, dog walkers and teenagers walking three abreast while staring into phones.

At this point, the school run becomes strategic.

The experienced parent knows every shortcut. They know which estate road saves three minutes, which junction is a trap, which traffic light has turned against humanity, and which lane contains people who still believe in kindness.

The novice parent thinks they can “just drop them at the gate”.

Ah, innocence.

The school gate ballet

The area outside a school at 8.45am is one of the most fascinating studies in human behaviour available to science.

Cars arrive from all directions. Indicators are used as expressions of hope rather than actual intention. Doors open suddenly. Children emerge backwards, sideways, half-dressed and carrying musical instruments the size of agricultural equipment.

Parents perform manoeuvres that would cause a driving tester to weep.

There is the Pause and Push, where a parent stops in the middle of the road and encourages children to exit at speed.

There is the Pretend Parking, where a car is technically abandoned but the driver remains inside with hazards on, as if the lights grant legal immunity.

There is the Reverse of Shame, where someone realises they have committed to an impossible space and must now retreat under public scrutiny.

There is the Grandparent Drift, calm, slow, and utterly unpredictable.

And then there is the most feared figure of all: the parent with time.

This person has arrived early. They have parked properly. Their children are wearing coats. Their hair is brushed. Their lunchboxes are labelled. They are smiling.

Nobody trusts them.

The politics of parking

Every school has parking rules. Nobody understands them, but everyone has strong feelings.

There are yellow lines, cones, signs, polite emails, less polite emails, and at least one WhatsApp group where someone says, “I’m not naming names, but...”

Parking near a school is a moral test. We all know we should not block gates, driveways, bus stops, cycle lanes or pedestrian crossings. We also know it is raining, the child has a project, the road is full, and we are late for work.

This is how decent people end up making poor decisions in high-vis territory.

The lollipop person sees everything. Never underestimate the lollipop person. They know who parks badly, who waves, who ignores them, whose child is always late, and which parent has lost control of both the car and the family unit.

They should be running the country.

Cycling, scooting and the dream of a better world

Every so often, a school encourages walking, cycling or scooting.

This is admirable. In theory, we all support it. We want healthier children, quieter roads, cleaner air and safe routes to school.

In practice, Ireland adds weather.

A child may start the week enthusiastically cycling to school. By Wednesday, the rain is horizontal, the schoolbag weighs more than the child, and a parent is standing in the hall saying, “Are you sure you don’t want a lift?”

The scooter is another matter. Scooters are wonderful until they have to be carried home by a parent who has already carried two bags, a coat, a lunchbox, a plastic volcano and the emotional burden of family life.

Still, the ambition is right. Every child who walks, cycles

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or scoots is one fewer car at the gate. The problem is that we have spent decades building communities around cars and then appear shocked when people use them.

A proper school-run revolution would need safe footpaths, decent crossings, joined-up cycle routes, and enough confidence that parents are not imagining their children being flattened by a van before maths.

Until then, we continue with the current system: everyone drives, then complains about everyone driving.

The WhatsApp Olympics

The school run is not confined to roads. It also takes place on WhatsApp.

Every class has a parents' group. It begins with noble intentions: reminders, homework updates, lost jumpers, school events.

Within weeks, it becomes a rolling broadcast of modern anxiety.

"Is it PE today?"

"Does anyone know if they need tin foil?"

"Are they supposed to dress as a character from a book or a character from Irish history?"

"Whose child came home with one black shoe and one navy shoe?"

"Did anyone else get the email?"

There is always one parent who replies to everything with a thumbs-up. There is another who writes "Thanks hun" regardless of context. There is usually someone who sends a message at 11.47pm asking if the children need to bring in a shoebox, three buttons and a photo of a grandparent.

The worst message of all is: "Just a reminder..."

Nothing good follows "just a reminder".

The evening return fixture

People talk about the morning school run, but the afternoon collection is just as competitive.

The morning has urgency. The afternoon has fatigue.

Parents arrive early and sit in cars staring into space, enjoying the only silence they will experience all day. Some pretend to read emails. Some scroll phones. Some simply grip the steering wheel and gather strength.

Then the children emerge.

One has lost their jumper. One has lost their water bottle. One has someone else's jumper. One has news that they need cardboard, glue and googly eyes for tomorrow. One says they are starving despite returning with a full lunchbox.

You ask, "How was school?"

They say, "Fine."

This is the entire debrief.

You ask, "What did you do?"

They say, "Nothing."

Apparently, the Department of Education is funding six hours of nothing per day.

Then, at bedtime, when you are emotionally finished, they suddenly remember an important note, a permission slip, a costume requirement or a project involving papier-mâché.

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For all the chaos, there is something touching about the school run.

It is exhausting, irritating, repetitive and often absurd. But it is also one of the rhythms of family life. The same roads, the same faces, the same crossings, the same children growing taller by the term.

One day, the child who could not find their shoe will be heading off to college, work or a life where they are responsible for their own lunchbox. The school gate that once felt like a battleground will become a memory. You may even miss it.

Not the traffic. Nobody misses the traffic.

But you may miss the small rituals: the kiss before they got too old for kisses, the little hand disappearing into the crowd, the anxious first day, the Christmas jumper morning, the school tour excitement, the wet coats, the art projects, the half-told stories from the back seat.

The school run is not just a commute. It is parenthood on wheels.

It is messy, stressful, funny, competitive and deeply human.

And in D15, every morning, thousands of parents line up once again for Ireland's most demanding amateur sport.

No medals are awarded.

But anyone who gets everyone to school on time, with shoes, lunch and the correct child, deserves a podium finish.



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Ireland's Health Check

Living Longer, Waiting Longer



There are two very different stories being told about health in Ireland today.

The first is the cheerful one. We are living longer, smoking less than previous generations, surviving illnesses that once carried a much worse prognosis, and most of us still describe our health as good. In fact, Ireland has one of the highest life expectancies in Europe, at 82.9 years in 2023, and almost 80% of people here rated their health as good or very good — the highest figure in the EU. Death rates from cancer, heart disease, respiratory illness and circulatory disease have all fallen over the past decade.

The second story is the one we recognise when we try to get a GP appointment, sit in an emergency department, wait for a scan, or hear of a child waiting months for mental health support. Ireland is healthier on paper, but increasingly anxious in the waiting room.

The ageing country

One of the biggest health issues in Ireland is not an illness at all. It is age.

Ireland's population has grown by 15.2% since 2016, but the number of people aged over 65 has risen much faster — up 36.7% between 2016 and 2025. Older people accounted for more than half of inpatient hospital bed days in 2024. That is not a criticism of older people; it is simply the arithmetic of modern healthcare. Longer life is a triumph, but it brings more arthritis, heart disease, dementia, falls, frailty, diabetes, cancer follow-up care and medication management.

This is why the health service can recruit more staff, spend more money, and still feel under pressure. Ireland has more hospital doctors and nurses than it had a decade ago, and public health expenditure has more than doubled since 2015, but demand keeps running ahead.

Waiting has become part of the diagnosis

Waiting lists remain one of the great frustrations of Irish life. There has been progress: the Department of Health says the number of patients waiting more than 12 months has fallen by about 53% since September 2021. But it also acknowledges that recent gains have been hit by higher demand and increased referrals.

The problem is not just inconvenience. Waiting changes lives. A sore hip becomes immobility. A delayed assessment becomes a family under pressure. A long wait for a consultant appointment turns ordinary worry into full-time anxiety.

Emergency departments tell the same story in more dramatic form. On 7 June 2026, the HSE's 8am national urgent and emergency care snapshot showed 219 admitted patients on trolleys, 32 of them waiting more than 24 hours, alongside 524 delayed transfers of care. These are not abstract figures. They represent people medically well enough to leave hospital but unable to do so because home care, step-down care or nursing home places are not ready.

The GP is now the front line — if you can find one

For most people, the GP is the health service. It is where chest infections, blood pressure, anxiety, blood tests, prescriptions, referrals and family worries all land first.

But GP access is under strain. The Irish College of GPs reported in March 2026 that workforce pressures are particularly evident in Dublin's commuter belt, the western seaboard, parts of the North West, Border counties, the South East, and areas of urban deprivation in north Dublin. It also noted that many practices are closed to new patients or working at capacity.

This matters because a strong GP service keeps people out of hospitals. When primary care is stretched, more people end up in emergency departments, illnesses are spotted



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later, and chronic conditions become harder to manage.

Mental health: the quiet epidemic

Mental health is now one of Ireland's defining health issues, especially among younger people. The CSO's Irish Health Survey 2025 found that almost 6% of people reported bad or very bad general mental health. Among women aged 15 to 24, the figure was 12.8%; among men of the same age, 8.4%. The same survey found that 10.4% of people reported depression in the previous 12 months.

Behind those numbers are the familiar pressures of modern life: housing insecurity, social media, loneliness, cost of living, work stress, family breakdown, and the constant low-level panic of being contactable all the time. We have more ways to communicate than ever, yet many people feel less heard.

Children's mental health services are under particular pressure. Public reports in 2026 pointed to more than 1,100 children waiting over nine months for CAMHS at the end of December 2025, with hundreds waiting more than a year.

Weight, food and the Irish lifestyle

Ireland's relationship with food has changed beyond recognition. The old diet had plenty wrong with it, but it did not involve constant grazing, delivery apps, giant coffees, ultra-processed snacks and a supermarket aisle dedicated to things pretending to be breakfast.

The CSO reported that 21.5% of people in Ireland were classified as obese in 2025, with the highest rates among those aged 55 to 64. Obesity is not just about willpower. It is about environment: car-dependent towns, long commutes, stress, cheap calories, sedentary work, and the fact that many people are too tired at 7pm to lovingly prepare meals.

The future health burden will not come from one dramatic national illness. It will come from the slow accumulation of weight, inactivity, poor sleep, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

Alcohol: improving, but still part of the furniture

Ireland is drinking a little less, but alcohol remains deeply woven into social life. The Healthy Ireland Survey 2025 found that 71% of people aged 15 or over drank alcohol in the previous year, down from 73% in 2024. But 26% of the population reported binge drinking on a typical drinking occasion, and 20% were at risk of hazardous or harmful drinking. Men were much more likely than women to binge drink.

One interesting shift is the rise of non-alcoholic drinks. A quarter of people said they drink non-alcoholic beer, wine or spirits, often because they are driving, cutting down, or want to avoid a hangover. That may be one of the quieter health revolutions in Ireland: not giving up the pub, but changing what is in the glass.

Smoking down, vaping up

Smoking has fallen dramatically among young people, which is a public health success. But vaping has complicated the picture. The CSO found that 11.9% of people were daily smokers in 2025, while 6.9% were daily vapers, with vaping more common among younger adults.

The concern is that Ireland may be replacing one nicotine habit with another. Vaping is not smoking, and for some adult smokers, it may be part of quitting. But brightly packaged disposable vapes, sweet flavours and teenage uptake have made nicotine fashionable again in a way public health campaigns had spent decades trying to undo.

The bugs are getting smarter

Antibiotic resistance rarely makes the front page, but it should worry us. The HPSC reported that antibiotic consumption in Irish primary care was stable in early 2025 but remained above the EU average. Ireland ranked ninth highest among EU/EEA countries for community antibacterial consumption in 2024, and meeting the EU's 2030 reduction target will require sustained effort.

The lesson is simple but difficult: antibiotics are precious. They do not work for viruses, and using them when they are not needed makes them less effective when they are.

Sexual health is still a public health issue

Ireland has become more open about sexual health, and free home STI testing is a major improvement. HPSC data published in June 2026 showed STI notification rates fell by 8% in 2025 compared with 2024, driven by decreases in chlamydia and gonorrhoea. But rates remain 21% higher than in 2019, and young people aged 15 to 24 accounted for a third of all STI notifications.

The message is not moral panic. It is practical: test, treat, inform partners, and remove the embarrassment. Silence is

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Ireland is a country where many people live long lives, survive serious illness, and benefit from skilled doctors, nurses, pharmacists, carers and therapists. But it is also a country where access is uneven, waiting is normalised, mental health services are stretched, and lifestyle-related illness is quietly building the next wave of pressure.

The health advice for individuals remains familiar: move more, drink less, stop smoking, sleep properly, get screened, mind your blood pressure, protect your mental health, and see your GP when something changes.

But the national advice is just as important: invest earlier, not later. A GP appointment today is cheaper than a hospital bed tomorrow. A child seen by mental health services this month may be a young adult spared years of crisis. A home-care package can free a hospital bed. A walkable town is a health policy. A decent house is a health policy. So is a school meal, a safe cycle lane, a shorter waiting list and a less lonely community.

Ireland's health challenge is no longer simply helping people live longer. It is helping them live better — and making sure they are not left waiting too long for the chance.




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THE GREAT D15 COMMUTE

Buses, Cars, Bikes and the Battle to Get Home

There is a particular kind of optimism required to leave Dublin 15 at 8 o'clock on a weekday morning and believe everything will go smoothly. It is the same optimism required to think you can “just pop over” to the Blanchardstown Centre on a Saturday afternoon, or collect one child from training in Castleknock and another from Ongar without requiring the strategic mind of a military commander.

Dublin 15 is one of the great success stories of modern suburban Dublin. It has homes, schools, parks, shopping, business parks, restaurants, sports clubs and a population that seems to grow every time someone turns a sod. But success brings traffic. And in D15, traffic is not just a transport issue. It is part of daily life.

For many residents, the commute defines the rhythm of the day. The morning begins with school runs, bus stops, railway stations, the N3, the M50, industrial estates, office parks and the eternal question: “Will I make it on time?” The evening brings the reverse journey, usually with added tiredness, rain, hunger and someone texting to ask what’s for dinner.

The car remains king in much of Dublin 15, not

always by choice but by necessity. The area is large and spread out. A person living in Tyrrelstown may work in Sandyford. Someone in Clonsilla may need to get children to school in Castleknock. A family in Ongar may have one parent going to town, another heading to the airport side, and children scattered across activities that all start at exactly the same time.

On paper, Dublin 15 is well connected. It has the N3, access to the M50, rail links from places such as Castleknock and Clonsilla, and a large bus network. In real life, the problem is that everyone else knows this too. Roads designed to move people quickly can become slow-moving rivers of brake lights. The convenience of living near major routes is slightly undermined when half the county is also trying to use them.

Public transport is improving, but it has long carried the burden of expectation in the area. BusConnects is gradually redesigning the Dublin bus network, replacing older route patterns with spines, orbitals, local routes and more frequent services. Transport for Ireland says the redesign has been rolling out in phases since 2021, with further phases planned through 2026.

For Dublin 15, the next big piece of that puzzle is

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the A-spine. BusConnects says the A1 to A4 spine routes are planned to launch in autumn 2026, subject to operational readiness and funding. The A-spine is particularly relevant because it is intended to serve areas including Blanchardstown, Clonsilla, Castleknock, Ongar and surrounding communities.

That sounds promising, and it is. But commuters are practical people. They do not judge transport by network diagrams. They judge it by whether the bus arrives, whether they get a seat, whether the connection works, whether the trip is quicker than driving, and whether they can rely on it five days a week. A great route on a map is only a great route in life if it works in rain, traffic, school-term chaos and winter darkness.

Cycling and walking are also becoming bigger parts of the conversation. Fingal County Council describes active travel as walking or cycling “with a purpose” as part of a journey, not just for leisure. That distinction matters, because many people would happily walk or cycle more often if the route felt safe, direct and practical.

In January 2026, Fingal announced €33.1 million in active travel funding, including support for Safe Routes to School projects. Dublin 15 schools listed in that announcement included Coolmine Community School and Scoil Oilibhéir. The point of these schemes is not merely to paint lines on roads, but to reduce congestion around school gates and make walking or cycling safer for families.

Anyone who has witnessed the morning ballet outside a busy school will understand the need. Cars edge forward. Children appear from unexpected angles. Parents wave apologetically while doing three-point turns in spaces designed for bicycles. Everyone agrees there are too many cars, while sitting in one.

The challenge is that Dublin 15 was not built as one neat town. It is a patchwork of older villages, housing estates, newer suburbs, retail zones, business parks and distributor roads. Castleknock, Blanchardstown, Clonsilla, Mulhuddart, Ongar, Tyrrelstown and Carpenterstown all have their own identity, but the daily journey between them is not always simple.

That is why the commute in D15 is often not just about getting into Dublin city centre. It is about moving across Dublin 15 itself. The parent commute, the school commute, the gym commute,

the match commute and the “I forgot milk” commute may matter as much as the office commute. A place can have excellent links to the city and still be awkward for local journeys.

Fingal’s Development Plan 2023–2029 sets the official framework for growth across the county, including housing, transport, sustainability and community development. The plan came into effect on 5 April 2023, and its ambitions will be tested sharply in high-growth areas such as Dublin 15.

The central question is simple: can infrastructure keep up with population? New homes are needed. Young families need somewhere to live. Older residents may want to downsize without leaving the community. Workers need access to jobs. But every new development adds pressure unless transport, schools, footpaths, cycle routes, GP services and public spaces grow with it.

There is no single magic answer. More buses will help. Better orbital routes will help. Safer cycling will help. More reliable rail connections will help. Better local planning, so people can walk to shops, schools and services, will help. But Dublin 15 also needs something less glamorous: joined-up thinking.

The future D15 commute cannot be solved by assuming everyone will drive, nor by pretending everyone can cycle. It needs to accept the real lives people lead. Some residents will always need cars. Some would use buses more if they were reliable and frequent. Some would cycle if they felt safe. Some would walk if paths and crossings were better designed. Most people are not ideologues about transport. They just want to get where they are going without losing the will to live.

There is reason for optimism. Dublin 15 has the scale to support better services. It has young families, busy workers, schools, retail centres, parks and major employment areas. The demand is there. The question is whether the transport system can become good enough that choosing the bus, bike or train feels sensible rather than heroic.

Until then, the great D15 commute continues. Engines start. Leap Cards are tapped. Children are bundled into cars. Cyclists watch the clouds. Buses are tracked on phones with religious intensity. Somewhere on the N3, a driver wonders why they did not leave ten minutes earlier.

Dublin 15 has become a mini-city. Now it needs a transport system worthy of one.



Drone Deliveries in D15

Convenience from the Sky or a Buzz Too Far?

Not long ago, the idea of a takeaway arriving by drone sounded like something from a technology show. A small aircraft would lift off, cross the suburbs, hover near your home and lower your order by cable. No traffic. No motorbike. No delivery driver trying to find the right estate entrance in the rain.

Then it arrived in Dublin 15, and the future suddenly became very local.

Drone delivery has become one of the most talked-about issues in D15 because it sits right at the crossroads of modern life: convenience, technology, privacy, noise, planning, business, the environment and the simple right to sit in your garden without something buzzing overhead.

At the centre of the debate is Manna, the Irish drone delivery company that has been operating in Dublin West. The company says it has completed more than 250,000 deliveries, including 60,000 in Blanchardstown over two years, delivering items such as food, books, clothing and medical supplies. Enterprise Ireland also announced in April 2026 that Manna planned to create 400 new jobs in Ireland as it expanded its drone delivery operations.

For supporters, this is exactly the kind of innovation Ireland should welcome. It is Irish-led, fast, eye-catching and potentially useful. A drone can avoid traffic, reduce some road journeys and get small items to customers quickly. For restaurants and retailers, it offers the promise of reaching nearby customers without relying only on vans, cars or bikes.

Deliveroo has also entered the picture. In 2025, it partnered with Manna to trial drone deliveries in Dublin, with the service based in Blanchardstown and aimed at customers within a 3km radius. The company described the aim as helping serve suburban and harder-to-reach locations faster, with restaurant orders potentially delivered in minutes.

So far, so futuristic.

But the controversy begins when the drone leaves the marketing video and flies over real homes.

Residents in parts of Dublin 15 have complained about repeated noise, disturbance, privacy concerns and the

feeling that a commercial service has effectively moved into the sky above their neighbourhoods. In November 2025, RTÉ reported that more than 90 submissions had been lodged with Fingal County Council on Manna's retention application for a drone delivery hub, with the majority opposed.

The central complaint is not usually about one drone. It is about repetition. A single drone passing overhead may be a novelty. A steady pattern of drones, especially during busy ordering periods, can feel very different. Residents have described the sound as intrusive, difficult to ignore and unlike ordinary background traffic because it comes from above and arrives unpredictably.

That is an important point. People are used to road noise, even when they dislike it. They can close a front window, avoid a busy road or accept that traffic belongs to a particular corridor. Drone noise is different because it can appear over gardens, estates, schools and quiet residential spaces. It changes the soundscape of an area, not just the road network.

The issue came to a head in May 2026 when Fingal County Council refused Manna permission to continue operating from its Coolmine base. Dublin Inquirer reported that the council found the noise information submitted did not provide enough evidence to show that adverse noise effects could be avoided. The council concluded that, in the absence of sufficient evidence, the operation resulted in "serious noise pollution."

That decision matters because it highlights a key distinction. Drone operators may have aviation approvals, but that does not automatically settle every local planning, noise or quality-of-life issue. In other words, a drone can be considered safe to fly under aviation rules while still raising planning questions about where a hub should be based, how often flights should happen and what level of noise residents should be expected to tolerate.

The Irish Aviation Authority says drone operators need authorisation if they wish to fly outside the limits of the open category. It also notes that drone operations are subject to EU safety rules, registration, training and operational requirements depending on the type of flight. In 2021, the

IAA issued Manna Aero Ireland's first Light UAS Operator Certificate, describing it as following a rigorous assessment under EU drone regulations.

That is why the debate can become confused. When residents say, "this is not properly regulated," they may not mean there are no aviation rules at all. They often mean that the rules have not caught up with what it feels like to live under regular commercial drone routes.

The Government has recognised the wider issue. Ireland's National Policy Framework for Unmanned Aircraft Systems, launched in August 2025, says drone policy must support growth and innovation while ensuring operations remain safe and secure and that environmental and social concerns are managed. The framework focuses on airspace and planning, compliance and enforcement, and enterprise and innovation.

That sounds sensible, but local residents often want something more immediate. Policy frameworks can feel distant when the issue is a drone passing over your house today.

There has also been political pressure for clearer law. Roderic O'Gorman's Regulation of Drones Bill 2025 sought to address commercial drone operations, including planning and noise considerations. In Dáil debate, the Bill was described as dealing with the planning and noise questions arising from commercial operators. O'Gorman said the Bill was intended to begin regulating commercial drone use in the public interest, including provisions around planning and noise complaints.

For D15, the question is no longer whether drones are technically impressive. They are. The question is whether suburban neighbourhoods should become test beds for a new delivery model before residents, councils and national regulators have fully agreed the rules.

There are arguments on both sides.

The case for drone delivery is straightforward. It is fast. It can reduce some short road journeys. It may help local restaurants and retailers reach more customers. It supports an Irish technology company with international ambitions. It may be useful for urgent small items, medicines, supplies or deliveries to people with mobility issues. In a world where traffic and emissions matter, the idea of moving a small package through the air rather than by car has obvious appeal.

The case against is equally human. Residents did not buy homes expecting commercial aircraft, however small, to pass overhead repeatedly. Noise from above can feel invasive. Privacy concerns arise even if drones are not recording people in the way residents fear. Wildlife, pets, children, schools, gardens and general peace all become part of the discussion. Above all, people want to know who decides what happens in the sky over their homes.

This is not a simple "technology good" or "technology bad" story. Most residents are not against all drones. Few people would object to drones being used in search and rescue,



medical emergencies, fire services, infrastructure inspections or other clear public-interest work. The sharper question is whether the same tolerance should apply to routine fast-food and retail deliveries.

That is where lifestyle meets public policy. A community is not just a market. It is also a place where people sleep, work, raise children, walk dogs, sit outside, recover from illness and enjoy quiet. Convenience for one person should not automatically become disturbance for another.

The likely future is not a total ban and not a free-for-all. It will probably involve tighter rules: clearer planning permission for drone hubs, limits on operating hours, proper noise assessments, defined flight paths, transparent complaint systems, stronger privacy reassurance and a distinction between essential public-interest drone use and routine commercial delivery.

Dublin 15 has found itself at the front of a national argument. That is uncomfortable, but it may also prove useful. The experience of residents in Blanchardstown, Coolmine, Clonsilla, Castleknock and surrounding areas is now shaping how Ireland thinks about commercial drones.

The promise of drone delivery is real. So is the irritation.

The lesson from D15 is simple: the future may arrive by air, but it still has to land in a community. And communities deserve a say before the sky above them becomes part of the delivery network

Strawberry Sando



Summer is here, allegedly, and so are strawberries that taste like strawberries again. Here is an unusual food idea to try.

INGREDIENTS

- 150ml double cream
- 1 tbsp icing sugar
- ½ tsp vanilla extract (optional)
- 8 slices of soft white bread (ideally milk bread)
- 500g strawberries (ensure they're similarly sized), hulled and halved

METHOD

step 1

Whip the cream, sugar and vanilla (if using) together using an electric whisk until soft peaks form. Spread the whipped cream over the bread slices. Arrange the strawberries, cut-side down, over the cream on half the bread slices, then sandwich together with the remaining bread.

step 2

Cut the crusts off the sandos, if you like, then halve along the middle to create triangles. Wrap in baking parchment to take on a picnic.

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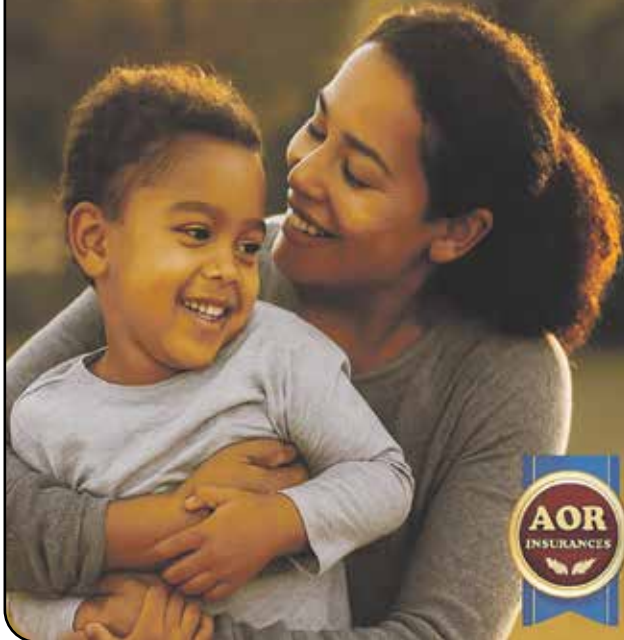
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Sporting D15

From GAA Pitches to the Sport Ireland Campus

There are many ways to measure the life of a community. You can count houses, shops, roads, schools and cafés. But if you really want to understand Dublin 15, look at the pitches on a Saturday morning.

There you will find the true machinery of suburban life: children in oversized jerseys, parents carrying water bottles and folding chairs, coaches shouting encouragement, grandparents watching from the sideline, and at least one small child who has lost interest in the match and is now examining a worm. This is sport as most families know it — not glamour, not sponsorship deals, not television cameras, but community in its muddy, noisy, life-affirming form.

Dublin 15 has become one of the most active sporting districts in the capital. That is partly because of its scale. Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Clonsilla, Ongar, Tyrrelstown, Mulhuddart, Coolmine, Corduff and surrounding

areas have grown into a large, young and diverse population. Where there are families, there are clubs. Where there are clubs, there are volunteers. And where there are volunteers, there is usually someone standing in the rain wondering why they ever agreed to become fixtures secretary.

The GAA remains one of the great social anchors of the area. St Brigid's GAA describes itself as proudly serving Blanchardstown and Castleknock since 1932, while Erin Go Bragh GAA says it serves the Dublin 15 area with football, hurling and camogie from nursery age through to adult teams. These clubs are more than sporting organisations; they are informal community centres, friendship networks and weekend organising systems for hundreds of families.

The same is true across soccer, rugby, athletics, swimming, martial arts, gyms and walking groups. For children, sport is often where confidence is built. For adults, it is where

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friendships survive beyond school gates and work meetings. For older residents, walking clubs, swimming and gentle fitness classes can be as important socially as physically.

But Dublin 15 also has something unusual: it is home to national-level sporting infrastructure. The Sport Ireland Campus in Blanchardstown is no ordinary local facility. Its facilities include the National Aquatic Centre, National Indoor Arena, outdoor athletics facilities, all-weather and grass pitches for Gaelic games, soccer and rugby, gyms, indoor halls and high-performance training spaces.

That gives D15 a sporting identity that stretches far beyond the local parish. In one part of the area, children are learning to solo a ball or take a penalty. In another, elite athletes are training in facilities designed for national and international competition. It is a rare combination: the grassroots and the high-performance world sitting almost side by side.

The National Aquatic Centre alone is a major asset. Sport Ireland Campus lists it as one of the world's largest indoor water centres, with a 10-lane 50-metre international-standard pool, diving pool, spectator seating and leisure water facilities. For Dublin 15 families, it is a place for lessons, exercise and rainy-day entertainment. For Irish sport, it is part of the country's serious competitive infrastructure.

The next major development is cricket. In November 2025, Sport Ireland announced that final planning permission had been granted for the first phase of the National Cricket Centre on the Sport Ireland Campus. Phase one is planned to include the main field of play, 4,240 spectator seats, a high-performance centre, player and match official facilities, supporting infrastructure and parking. The site is approximately 30 hectares on the eastern part of the Blanchardstown campus.

That matters because cricket tells a newer story about Dublin 15 and Ireland itself. Once viewed by many as a minority or niche sport, cricket now reflects the country's changing population. Sport Ireland has explicitly linked the new centre with Ireland's multicultural

communities and with the country's ability to host major international events, including matches connected to the 2030 ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

This is where sport becomes more than exercise. It becomes identity. The old image of Irish local sport was often built around GAA pitches, soccer clubs and parish rivalries. Those remain vital. But modern Dublin 15 is broader than that. It is a place where children may play Gaelic football on Saturday morning, basketball in a school hall, cricket in summer, swimming lessons in the afternoon and five-a-side under lights in the evening.

For parents, of course, this can feel less like a celebration of sport and more like unpaid logistics management. The modern sporting weekend often begins with someone shouting, "Where are your boots?" and ends with a damp car, a missing hoodie and a half-eaten packet of crisps discovered under the passenger seat. Families in Dublin 15 know this routine well. Sport gives children structure, friendship and confidence. It gives parents fresh air, community contact and a second career as taxi drivers.

Yet the benefits are obvious. In a fast-growing suburb, sport helps people belong. New residents may not immediately know their neighbours, but a child joining a club can connect a family to the area almost overnight. A jersey becomes a passport. A sideline conversation becomes a friendship. A club text group becomes the most active form of local communication known to mankind.

Sport also gives teenagers somewhere to go and something to do. That is no small thing. Dublin 15, like every large suburban area, needs positive spaces for young people. Clubs cannot solve every social problem, but they can give structure, adult encouragement, teamwork and a sense of achievement. For some young people, the coach who notices them may be as important as any teacher.

The challenge is keeping facilities in step with population. Every new housing development means more children, more teams, more



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training slots and more pressure on pitches, halls and changing rooms. A community can have enormous sporting enthusiasm and still run into a shortage of space. Floodlights, all-weather pitches, safe walking routes, public transport and school facilities all matter.

That is why D15's sporting future should not be left only to national campuses or heroic volunteers. It needs proper local planning. The Sport Ireland Campus is a flagship, but most sport still happens in ordinary places: school halls, community pitches, local parks, clubhouses and borrowed spaces. The national facilities bring prestige; the local facilities build habits.

The best version of sporting Dublin 15 would connect both worlds. Children inspired by national athletes should have a decent local pitch to play on. Families using the big facilities should also have safe parks and walkable neighbourhoods. Clubs producing talent should have the support to keep welcoming

beginners, late starters and the child who is more enthusiastic than gifted.

Because sport is not only about producing champions. It is about producing healthier, happier communities.

Dublin 15 is often discussed in terms of housing, traffic, shopping and development. All of that matters. But its sporting life tells a more hopeful story. It shows an area full of volunteers, coaches, parents, children, athletes and clubs trying to make community happen week after week.

From the GAA pitch to the swimming pool, from the local sideline to the national campus, D15 has become one of Ireland's most interesting sporting landscapes. It is local and national, traditional and changing, competitive and social.

And on a wet Saturday morning, when the whistle blows and a group of children chase the ball in the wrong direction, it is also exactly what community looks like.

The D15 Weekend

How to Spend Saturday Without Going Into Town



Once a proper Saturday meant “going into town.” You got yourself organised, found parking or braved the bus, walked around Henry Street or Grafton Street, bought something you probably didn’t need, had lunch somewhere overpriced, and came home exhausted but satisfied that you had participated in city life.

For many people in Dublin 15, that ritual is no longer essential. The city centre is still there, of course, with all its charm, history, crowds and complicated parking. But the truth is that a very good Saturday can now be had without leaving D15 at all.

In fact, the modern Dublin 15 weekend may be one of the area’s quiet successes. It is not glamorous in a brochure sense. It is more practical than that. You can walk, shop, eat, meet friends, bring the children somewhere, see a film, visit the library, go to a match, have coffee, get outdoors and still be home in time to wonder what happened to the rest of the day.

The trick is not to treat Dublin 15 as one giant suburb to be escaped from. Treat it as a place worth using.

A good Saturday might begin gently, with coffee and a walk. D15 has far more green space than people sometimes remember when they are sitting in traffic near the N3. St Catherine’s Park, for example, is one of the great local escapes. Fingal County Council describes it as a 200-acre park of woodland and grassland, with the River Liffey dividing part of the parklands. It is the kind of place where you can convince yourself you are

having a wholesome country morning while still being close enough to civilisation for a cappuccino afterwards.

For those closer to Castleknock, Clonsilla or Coolmine, the canal also offers a different sort of calm. The Royal Canal Greenway route is intended to serve Castleknock, Blanchardstown, Clonsilla, Coolmine and the wider Dublin 15 area, and the canal already gives walkers and cyclists a sense of distance from the rush of suburban roads.

After the walk comes the reward, because nobody should be expected to improve their health without compensation. This is where Dublin 15 excels. There are cafés, bakeries, hotel lounges, casual restaurants and quick food stops scattered across the area. The Blanchardstown Centre remains the obvious hub, not simply because of shopping, but because it has become the area’s all-weather fallback plan.

The centre describes itself as having 180 stores, three retail parks and 7,000 free parking spaces. That scale matters on a Saturday, because one person may want shoes, another wants lunch, someone else wants to look at phones, and the children want food immediately despite having eaten 40 minutes earlier.

It is easy to sneer at shopping centres, but Blanchardstown Centre performs a real social function in D15. It is where people meet when the weather is hopeless. It is where teenagers practise independence. It is where families go when nobody can agree on anything except that staying at home is not an option. Fingal’s own listing notes more than 25 restaurants and

coffee shops, along with a nine-screen Odeon cinema complex.

That gives the D15 Saturday a useful flexibility. You can go practical: groceries, pharmacy, clothes, birthday present, new school runners. Or you can go leisurely: coffee, browsing, lunch and a film. The Odeon at Blanchardstown lists nine screens, making the cinema one of the area's reliable weekend anchors.

But a Saturday in D15 does not have to revolve around shopping. One of the more underrated local stops is Blanchardstown Library. Located at the Blanchardstown Centre, it opens on Saturdays from 10am to 5pm according to Libraries Ireland. That makes it ideal for families who want a quieter hour, children who need books, students who need space, or adults who still believe browsing shelves is one of life's civilised pleasures.

The library also changes the tone of the day. A Saturday built only around spending money can start to feel a little hollow. A library visit, a park walk or a local arts event adds something more human. It reminds us that a community is not just shops and traffic; it is also places where people can learn, sit, read, talk and belong.

For culture, Draíocht is one of Dublin 15's strongest assets. Located at the Blanchardstown Centre, it gives the area a proper arts venue rather than forcing residents to travel into town for every performance, workshop or exhibition. Fingal lists Draíocht Arts Centre at Blanchardstown Centre, and its own programme includes family events, youth theatre, workshops and access events.

That matters. A growing suburb needs more than houses, roads and retail. It needs culture close to home. It needs somewhere children can see theatre without a major expedition, somewhere teenagers can get involved creatively, and somewhere adults can enjoy an evening out without calculating the last bus home from the city centre.

Sport is another part of the D15 weekend. Between local GAA, soccer, rugby, athletics, swimming, gyms and walking groups, the area is full of activity. At the larger end of the scale, the Sport Ireland Campus in Blanchardstown includes major national facilities such as the National Aquatic Centre, National Diving Centre, outdoor synthetic pitches and other high-performance facilities.

For families, Saturday often means ferrying children from one activity to another while pretending this counts as leisure. One child has football, another has swimming, another needs to be collected from a birthday party, and somebody has lost a water bottle with their name clearly written on it. This is not relaxation in the traditional sense, but it is modern family life, and Dublin 15 is built around it.

The advantage is that much of what families need is close by. The disadvantage is that everyone else has discovered this as well. A D15 Saturday requires timing. Leave too late and you will meet the full force of shopping traffic, sports traffic, lunch traffic and people who appear to be driving around roundabouts for recreational purposes.

Still, the area rewards those who plan lightly rather than heroically. Start outdoors. Move indoors if the weather turns. Keep food simple. Do not try to do everything. The perfect D15 Saturday is not a military operation. It is a sequence of small local pleasures.

A possible version looks like this: morning walk in St Catherine's Park or along the canal; coffee afterwards; late-morning library visit or sports activity; lunch in Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Clonsilla or Ongar; a few practical errands; cinema, Draíocht, or a quiet evening meal. No Luas, no city-centre parking, no long march back to a multi-storey car park wondering where you left the car.

There is a bigger point here too. Dublin 15 has spent years growing into a mini-city, but many residents still talk about it as though life is elsewhere. That habit is becoming outdated. The area now has enough parks, shops, cafés, sports facilities, cultural venues and community life to make a strong case for staying local more often.

Of course, town still has its place. There are days when only the city centre will do. But the best local communities are not merely dormitories for somewhere else. They are places where ordinary life can be lived well.

That is the quiet charm of a D15 Saturday. It may not come with postcards or tourist slogans. It may involve traffic lights, wet jackets, shopping bags, children asking for snacks and the eternal search for a parking space near the entrance you actually need. But it also offers something valuable: a full day close to home.

And sometimes, that is better than going into town.

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