

ISSUE 59
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EDITORIAL

As the evenings are becoming shorter and the weather getting colder it gives us time to catch up on our reading and with that in mind we hope we have some interesting articles here for you.

Are you aware of the traditions behind the eating of the simple barmbrack and how it was meant to predict our future? An amusing read here for you all.

For those of us who enjoy the odd little tippie, are we really aware of its effect on us? See our article on Ireland's New Alcoholic Labels explained.

Finally, we have some dates for those of you who enjoy Christmas Markets showing when our top Christmas markets are happening.

Until next time. The Little Village Team

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Barmbrack:

The Irish Loaf That Tells Your Future

Few foods capture the spirit of an Irish Halloween quite like barmbrack — that speckled, fruit-filled loaf that seems to whisper stories of the past.

For generations, this humble bread has been the centrepiece of Samhain gatherings, bringing families together not just to share a slice, but to glimpse what the year ahead might hold.

From Samhain to the Sitting Room

The origins of barmbrack stretch back to Ireland's ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when people marked the turning of the seasons and honoured the spirits of their ancestors.

In later centuries, as Christian and Celtic customs intertwined, the loaf evolved into a Halloween fortune-telling bread — part treat, part tradition.

The name “barmbrack” (from the Irish báirín breac, meaning “speckled loaf”) refers to the dotted appearance of dried fruit throughout the dough. In earlier times, bakers would stir charms into the mix — each one holding a meaning for whoever found it in their slice.

A ring meant marriage within the year, a coin promised wealth, a rag warned of hardship, and a pea or stick foretold bachelorhood or spinsterhood. Families would gather around the table with laughter and mock-serious anticipation, each slice dished out like a mini prophecy.

The Modern Barmbrack

Today, shop-bought versions appear in every supermarket by mid-October — but there's nothing like the homemade kind, rich with fruit soaked overnight in tea and spices.

It's the smell that brings back memories: the aroma of warm fruit, cinnamon, and nostalgia wafting through the house on a dark autumn evening.

Traditional Irish Barmbrack Recipe, You'll need:

- 225g plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 375g mixed dried fruit (sultanas, raisins, currants)

- 250ml strong black tea (cold)
- 125g light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ tsp mixed spice
- A pinch of salt
- Optional: a ring or coin (wrapped in parchment)

Method:

1. Soak the dried fruit in the cold tea overnight (or for at least six hours).
2. Preheat the oven to 170°C (fan 160°C). Line a 900g loaf tin with baking parchment.
3. In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, sugar, spice, and salt.
4. Add the soaked fruit (with tea) and the beaten egg. Stir to form a thick batter.
5. If using a charm, wrap it tightly in parchment and stir it into the mix.
6. Pour into the tin and bake for 1 hour, or until a skewer comes out clean.
7. Cool on a rack — and resist slicing until the next day, when it's even better.

Serving tip:

Barmbrack is best sliced thick, toasted, and spread with butter. Pair it with a cup of strong Barry's or Bewley's tea for the full Irish experience.

A Slice of the Past

Barmbrack is more than just a Halloween treat — it's a link to our ancestors, our stories, and those shared kitchen tables where laughter and superstition blended into one.

So this Halloween, skip the fancy cakes and carve out a bit of tradition instead. You never know — your next slice might just tell your fortune.

“One ring, one wish, one loaf — and a little Irish magic in every crumb.”



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Castleknock TidyTowns is spearheading a number of initiatives aimed at improving the public realm of the area.

Castleknock TidyTowns is spearheading a number of initiatives aimed at improving the public realm of the area. The latest enhancement has recently been unveiled at the pedestrian entrance to Peck's Lane from Castleknock Road. The project was carried out by the Operations Department of Fingal County Council. It consists of the installation of a pollinator friendly flower bed surrounded by a beautiful hand crafted curved low dry stone wall.

Directly opposite on the other side of the separating

footpath is a matching low curved dry stone wall surrounding a beautiful public seating bench.

Castleknock TidyTowns is keen to have a number of benches installed on various suitable access points to the village which denizens of the neighbourhood can use as rest areas while walking between locations. It's part of our initiative to make Castleknock village more accessible and "Age Friendly".

To learn more and get involved with Castleknock TidyTowns see www.castleknocktidytowns.ie

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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.

Hollystown / Hollywoodrath / Tyrrelstown Bus Service

Despite major growth in the Hollystown, Hollywoodrath and Tyrrelstown areas in recent years, bus services have not kept up pace. And while BusConnects will eventually offer 15-minute service to Blanchardstown and the city, this is still a while away. I've been pushing for more frequent buses in the meantime to meet rising demand.



Tolka River Pollution

Fingal County Council has acted after I reported pollution in the Tolka River near Mill Road Bridge, close to Connolly Hospital. A camera survey of the surface water drainage system traced the problem to a food grease discharge at a premises in Coolmine Industrial Estate. The owner was notified and carried out a clean-up. Thanks to Fingal County Council for their quick action - I expect the measures taken will prevent a recurrence.



Meeting with local INTO members in advance of Budget 26



Out and about with Blanch Tidy Towns

Regulation of Drones Bill 2025



I recently introduced a piece of legislation to regulate commercial drone use.

My bill requires drone bases to obtain planning permission and would make it easier for local authorities to handle noise complaints related to drones by changing existing environmental law. This would ensure that drone activity in neighbourhoods can be fairly and transparently managed.



Attending the recent Halloween Costume Swap run by Blanch Tidy Towns and Laurel Lodge Env. Group

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

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CLIMATE CHANGE SCENARIOS

We looked to the science to answer a pressing question: Is Ireland getting warmer or cooler? The overwhelming scientific consensus points to a warmer future, but with a crucial caveat involving the Atlantic Ocean.

The Overwhelming Evidence: A Warmer, Milder Ireland

The data shows a clear and ongoing warming trend for Ireland. We are already observing its effects: Ireland's average temperature has increased by approximately 0.9°C over the past century. This is reflected in a decrease in the number of frost and ice days, leading to winters that are noticeably milder than in past decades.

Looking ahead, projections indicate this trend will continue. By mid-century, average temperatures in Ireland are expected to be between 1.0 and 1.6°C higher. The exact amount of warming depends on global emissions, with projections ranging from a 0.5–0.7°C increase under lower emissions to a 2.4–3.0°C increase under high emissions. This will result in winters becoming less severe, with fewer frosts and warmer nights, while summers will experience more frequent heatwaves and drier conditions. The bottom line is that Ireland is expected to become warmer overall, with milder winters rather than colder ones.

The “Cooling” Hypothesis: A Note of Caution

Despite the consensus on warming, you may have heard theories that Ireland could face cooling. This idea is tied to the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)—the ocean current system that includes the Gulf Stream and gives Ireland its relatively mild climate. The theory suggests that if the AMOC weakens significantly due to melting polar ice, it could lead to regional cooling for Ireland. However, this is considered a high-risk but low-likelihood scenario. While possible, a full-scale collapse is not the mainstream scientific projection, and the dominant view remains one of continued warming.

What If the Gulf Stream Does Slow? A Scenario Guide

While not the most likely outcome, a significant slowdown of the AMOC would profoundly change Ireland's climate. A dramatic slowdown could lead to colder, stormier winters, especially in the west, with some models suggesting temperatures 2–4°C lower than they otherwise would be. It could also cause wetter storm seasons due to a shifted jet stream and drier, windier summers in eastern counties. Furthermore, ocean ecosystems that depend on stable temperatures and currents would be severely disrupted. It is crucial to understand that this would not mean a new ice age, but rather a scenario of relative cooling, where Ireland becomes locally cooler while the rest of the world continues to warm rapidly.

A weaker Gulf Stream doesn't cancel global warming—it changes how we experience it, representing a climate “tipping point” that could quickly shift our climate balance.

The Path Forward

The good news is that a full shutdown of the AMOC this century is unlikely, with a partial slowdown being the more probable outcome. The single biggest factor determining our future is greenhouse gas emissions. By rapidly reducing emissions, we slow the melting of Greenland's ice and give the Atlantic's climate engine a better chance of staying stable. The choice we make today directly impacts whether Ireland's future is predictably warmer or unpredictably erratic.

Sources: climateireland.ie, epa.ie, met.ie, ICHEC, Ireland's Marine Institute

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Dear Resident

I would like to share a few updates on local issues which I have been working on. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

All the best,
John

NEW PEDESTRIAN-CYCLE LINK FOR GRANARD BRIDGE – HAVE YOUR SAY!

Fingal Council are bringing forward a new pedestrian-cycle bridge across the Royal Canal and rail line beside Granard Bridge, Castleknock - this follows adoption of a Local Objective which I proposed in the Fingal Development Plan 2023-29.

The Council are holding a non-statutory consultation up to 31st October on the emerging preferred option. There is also an in person consultation event from 17:30-19:30 on 30th October in the Blanchardstown Library.

The scheme design includes a pedestrian and cycling link on the Laurel Lodge side from the new pedestrian and cycling bridge to the Roselawn Road/Castleknock Road junction and the Laurel Lodge Road/Castleknock Road junction.

LAUREL LODGE PLAYGROUND

The contractor has commenced works on the new playground for Laurel Lodge from mid-October 2025. Fingal Council has indicated that the playground will be operational early in the New Year following completion of the required safety inspection.

The Parks department has agreed to engage regularly with residents during the process of construction.

OLD SCHOOL HOUSE CLONSILLA

The consultation phase for the Master Plan for the Old School House in Clonsilla finished in August, with 277 submissions by residents, showing very strong participation by the local community especially during the summer. I have sought changes to the draft Master Plan to take on board concerns raised in the consultation about the restoration of the Old School House as a community centre and protection of biodiversity on the lands. I am campaigning for the Old School House to be restored and brought back into use as a community facility.



At the Castleknock Tidy Towns' annual quiz in Myos



CALL FOR SECOND SPECIAL SCHOOL IN DUBLIN 15

The local Area Committee approved a motion which I put forward calling for a second special school to be provided for Dublin 15:

“That the Chief Executive write to the Minister for Education and Minister of State for Special Education requesting them to guarantee full therapeutic support for all children in Danu Community Special School and to also provide a second special school in Dublin 15.”

Dublin 15 has a higher population than Limerick city and only one special school: there are at least six special schools in Cork city and county and three in Limerick. While Danu Community Special School is a fantastic school community, there is a major shortfall in essential services for children with additional needs in Dublin 15.



DRONE DELIVERY HUBS

Three drone delivery hubs in Clonsilla, Junction 6 and Coolmine industrial estate were originally established without planning permission and I had requested Fingal Council to take planning enforcement action to remove unauthorised drone delivery hubs. The Council recently confirmed that:

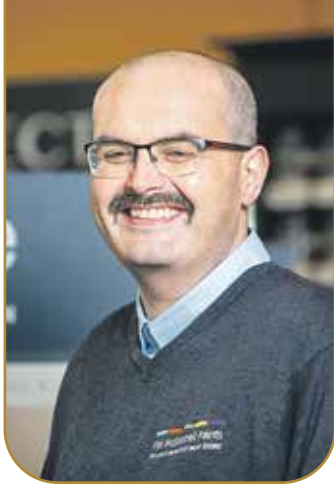
- The drone infrastructure in Clonsilla was dismantled.
- An Enforcement Notice was issued on 11th July 2025 in relation to Junction 6 which required ‘that within two months they cease use of the car park for launching or landing drones for the purpose of delivering goods’.
- In relation to Porter’s Avenue, Coolmine, an Enforcement Notice was issued on 7th October 2025 requiring within one month that they cease use of the lands identified as a drone delivery hub, removing landing pads and associated container and restoration of the land.

Applications were made by Manna Drones in September for retention of the hubs at Junction 6 and Porter’s Avenue.

- Over 100 submissions were made in relation to the drone delivery hub at Junction 6. I made a submission objecting to retention for the drone delivery hub, which conflicts with the land use zoning and is less than 100 metres from residential estates.
- The public consultation is currently open for retention of the delivery hub at Unit 14, Porter’s Avenue, Coolmine industrial estate (**FW25A/0428E**) - you can make submissions to Fingal Council online or by post by 3rd November and details are available at the following link: <https://planning.agileapplications.ie/fingal/application-details/102570>

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Paint Like a Pro: Let's Talk Bathrooms!

By Mick Gilbride | Dublin Area Manager, Pat McDonnell Paints

Thinking about giving your bathroom a makeover? Look no further! Below, we will answer some commonly asked questions about repainting bathrooms.

Do I Need a Special Paint for My Bathroom?

One option is to use Dulux Easycare Bathroom paint which is available in white and a curated range of ready mix-colours.

Alternatively, you can apply a high-quality emulsion paint, such as Ralston ExtraTex Satin, along with the Mould X Anti-Mould Additive if mould is a concern.

How to Prepare Bathroom Walls

Use a degreaser such as Fluxaf Power Clean to remove soap scum, dirt, dust, mould and grime from the walls. Once dry, scrape or sand away any peeling paint. Repair cracks or holes with a filler; we like the Prestonett Ready-Mixed Interior Filler.

To paint, start by using a 2" brush to paint a border along the wall's edges, this is known as cutting-in. Roll on your paint with a suitable 9" roller. Once the first coat has fully dried (check the manufacturer's instructions), you can apply a second coat.

Tackling Mould & Mildew

As high-moisture and high-humidity environments, bathrooms are particularly vulnerable to mould. While paint can hide unsightly mould growth, it is at best a temporary solution.

To tackle bathroom mould, always start by identifying and

addressing the moisture source. Then generously spray MouldX Anti-Mould Additive on the affected areas, leave for five minutes, rinse off, and allow dry.

Now that you are ready to paint – you have two options:

1. You can apply two coats of a mould-resistant paint such as Zinsser Perma-White. This is available in a matt or satin finish and can be tinted to the pastel colour of your choice.
2. Alternatively, you can add an anti-mould paint additive such as Mould X Anti-Mould Additive into a standard emulsion paint such as Ralston ExtraTex Satin in any colour.

Getting rid of Water Stains on the Ceiling

Always start by identifying and fixing the source of the leak. Next, thoroughly clean the water stains with a bleach solution. Once fully dry, spot-prime the stained areas with Zinsser B-I-N. Allow to dry, then apply two coats of standard emulsion paint.

Can I Paint My Bathroom Wall Tiles?

Painting your wall tiles is a quick and inexpensive way of refreshing your bathroom! Start by thoroughly cleaning and degreasing your wall tiles with Fluxaf Power Clean. Apply one coat of Ralston Aqua All-Primer followed by two coats of Ralston Aqua in your preferred colour and finish.

Paint Around My Bathroom Fittings?

Bathrooms contain many fixed fittings and features that can be tricky to paint around. With this in mind, we suggest investing in a high-quality masking tape that won't let you down like the Deltec Gold Masking Tape. It is also worth using a brush to reach awkward spots such as behind the toilet and sink.



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Table for Trouble: The Challenges Facing Irish Restaurant Owners in 2025



Ireland's restaurant scene has never been so creative — or so fragile

Behind every perfect plate of hake, every candlelit table in a bistro, there's a story of survival. In 2025, Irish restaurateurs are juggling more than ingredients; they're wrestling with rising costs, staff shortages, and the slow squeeze of post-pandemic economics.

The Bill No One Wants to Pay

Even as customers return to dining out, the cost of running a restaurant in Ireland has soared.

From energy bills to VAT, insurance, and rent, the numbers just don't add up like they used to.

Chef-owner Clare McKenna of a small restaurant in Kildare says her monthly electricity bill has doubled in three years.

"We turn off every light we can," she laughs, "but you can't cook in the dark."

The return of VAT on hospitality from 9% to 13.5% has been a particular blow. For many small operators, it's the difference between breaking even and falling behind.

Even food costs are volatile — dairy, meat, and imported goods still fluctuate wildly due to global supply chains and the lingering effects of Brexit.

A Staff Crisis That Won't Go Away

Then there's the labour shortage.

The pandemic scattered Ireland's hospitality workforce, and many never came back. Chefs moved abroad; servers found steadier 9-to-5 jobs.

"We've become recruiters first and restaurateurs second," says Eoin Daly, who runs a café in Dublin 15. "Finding staff with experience — or just enthusiasm — is the biggest daily struggle."

Training new staff takes time and money, and burnout is real. Owners are working longer hours just to keep doors open.

Customers Are Changing Too

Irish diners have changed. They're dining out less often,

spending more carefully, and expecting more — from dietary options to sustainability to slick service.

At the same time, delivery apps and rising home-entertainment habits mean restaurants must work harder to tempt people out.

"People love eating out," says Clare, "but the cost of living means they treat it as a rare luxury now — not a weekly thing."

The Love That Keeps It Going

And yet, amid all the challenges, Irish restaurant owners keep cooking.

They do it for the love of food, for community, and for those moments when a table of friends laughs over dessert and the hard day melts away.

Local producers and chefs are banding together more than ever — sharing suppliers, hosting pop-ups, running farm-to-fork collaborations, and turning adversity into creativity.

"There's still magic in it," says Eoin. "It's just harder to afford the ingredients."

A Delicate Balance

Irish restaurants are part of the country's cultural identity — as vital as pubs, music, or sport. But in 2025, they need more than applause; they need structural support, fairer costs, and policies that let passion survive the paperwork.

Until then, the menus will keep changing, the lights will flicker on, and the chefs will keep showing up — because hospitality, in Ireland, isn't just a business. It's who we are.

"We're still feeding people," says Clare. "That's what matters most."

5 Pressures on Irish Restaurants in 2025

1. Rising Costs

Energy, insurance, and supplier prices have all surged.

- Electricity bills up by 80–100% since 2020.

- Food inflation running at around 6–8%, with imports hardest hit.

"Every delivery costs more before we even switch on the oven."



our Favourites

Crispy Chilli Chicken
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Camile Spring Rolls
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Harry's Bangin' Panang
A comforting curry made with Harry's Nut Butter

Pad Thai Chicken Wings
Homemade sticky sweet tamarind wings

Camile
good mood thai food

See Full Menu

2. VAT & Tax Pressures

The return of the 13.5% VAT rate on food service and hospitality has squeezed small independents.

Many had budgeted for the 9% rate to stay — meaning profits are wiped out almost overnight.

3. Staffing Shortages

Hospitality remains one of Ireland's most understaffed sectors.

- CSO data shows vacancy rates above 12% in food service.
- Work permits help, but training and retention remain tough.

"We're always hiring — but rarely filling."

4. Changing Dining Habits

The cost-of-living crisis means fewer spontaneous dinners out. People plan more carefully, seek value menus, or opt for takeaways.

"Treat dining is replacing casual dining."

5. Mental & Financial Burnout

Behind the smiles, many owners are struggling with exhaustion.

- 1 in 3 restaurant owners surveyed by the RAI report considering closing within a year.
- Long hours, high stress, and razor-thin margins take their toll.

"You have to love it — or you couldn't do it."

Outlook

Despite the strain, Irish food culture remains strong. Community collaborations, local sourcing, and creative pop-ups show resilience.

The industry isn't just surviving — it's reinventing itself.

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Mattress Mick Book Release

Many have called him the people's princess. Others have urged him to run for the presidency of Ireland. But there's only one Michael Flynn — better known to the nation as Mattress Mick.

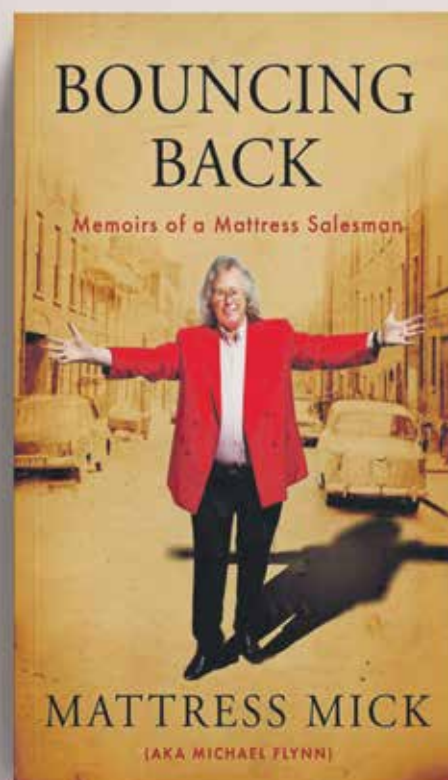
Now, the larger-than-life entrepreneur and marketing maverick has shared his incredible story in *Bouncing Back: Memoirs of a Mattress Salesman*, a book that charts his rollercoaster journey through fame, failure, and fierce resilience. From near-bankruptcy to becoming one of Ireland's most recognisable figures, Flynn lays it all bare the highs, the heartbreaks, and the humour that's defined his life.

Hailed as inspiring, heartwarming, and brilliantly funny, the memoir takes readers deep into the man behind the mattress. Mick opens up about the loss of his beloved wife Margaret in 2023, the adoption of his daughter Marina from Russia, and the personal battles that shaped his remarkable comeback. It's an unflinchingly honest portrait of an ordinary man with extraordinary spirit proof that even when life knocks you down, you can always bounce back.

Co-authored by Josephine McCaffrey, a writer originally from Leitrim, the pair met in the most unusual of ways, a story in itself, documented in the book. Josephine McCaffrey, who also wrote the musical inspired by Flynn's life, spent months working side by side with him to piece together his story, from his boyhood days on Pearse Street, through family joys and deep losses, to the unconventional marketing genius that made him a national icon.

At its heart, *Bouncing Back* is a love letter to perseverance, community, and creativity. It's about refusing to give up, no matter what life throws your way — whether that means thinking outside the box or, in Mick's case, outside the bed.

Today, Flynn stands as one of Ireland's most beloved public figures, known not only for his humour and hustle but also for his generosity and social activism, including his work with Apollo House. His story resonates deeply



with anyone who's faced hardship and kept going.

Bouncing Back: Memoirs of a Mattress Salesman is a celebration of resilience, laughter, and the unbreakable Irish spirit — available now online and in all good bookshops.





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Community on Stage: The People Behind D15's Local Theatre & Music Scene



On a Friday night in Blanchardstown, as the lights dim inside Draíocht Arts Centre, a familiar buzz fills the air. Parents, teenagers, retirees, and first-time theatre-goers shuffle into their seats — locals watching locals light up the stage.

For many in Dublin 15, Draíocht isn't just a venue. It's the heartbeat of the area's cultural life — a stage where creativity, confidence, and community meet. And behind every show, there's a story of teamwork, passion, and homegrown pride.

A Stage for Everyone

Opened in 2001, Draíocht has become a launchpad for countless local performers, from amateur dramatists to professional musicians.

Emer McGuire, the theatre's community engagement manager, says the secret to its success is inclusivity.

"Our doors are open to everyone — from the five-year-old taking their first drama class to the retiree rediscovering their voice. It's about giving people space to express themselves."

Through youth drama programmes, local arts festivals, and cross-generational projects, Draíocht helps weave creativity into the daily life of Dublin 15.

The Spirit of Local Theatre

Just up the road, the Castleknock Musical Society rehearses in a school hall that hums with laughter and piano chords. They've been

staging shows for over 40 years — from Oklahoma! to Mamma Mia! — powered entirely by volunteers.

Sean Murray, a long-time member, says,

"We all have day jobs — teachers, taxi drivers, accountants — but when we come here, we're family. That's the magic of community theatre."

It's that sense of belonging that keeps the society alive — where every costume, set, and spotlight cue is a labour of love.

Music That Moves the Community

It's not just drama that brings people together.

The Blanchardstown Brass Band has been playing for over a century, filling local parades, Christmas fairs, and church halls with music. In Ongar, open-mic nights and community choirs give young artists their first taste of performance.

From GAA halls to school auditoriums, D15's music scene thrives on heart and habit — week after week, neighbours come together to sing, play, and applaud.

Why It Matters

In an age of streaming and screens, live local performance offers something real — shared laughter, applause, and connection. It's a reminder that community isn't built online; it's built on nights like these, under the lights, with familiar faces on stage.

"When the curtain rises," says Emer, "you see what makes D15 special — the people. Always the people."



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A lovely company to deal with couldn't...

A lovely company to deal with couldn't fault anything, they arrived early on the day of installation and got straight to work, explained everything they were going to do. Very polite and friendly. The company ran through everything from the BER cert to the install, filled out all the forms for me to claim my grant back and to set me up to export back to the grid. They were very helpful and knowledgeable. Could not recommend them enough.

Date of experience: July 03, 2024

Jul 4, 2024

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I would be very happy to recommend AK Solar. The whole process from the initial proposal to the installation. I was very impressed with the kit which took less than six hours. Everyone involved really enjoyed the process. Everything was explained very well by Alan and Frankie. Organisation by Clare and Rose was excellent with the BER and the SEAI grant application made. I literally had to do nothing.

Date of experience: April 22, 2024



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Budget 2025: Small Boosts Big Hopes

Ireland's Budget 2025 isn't a splashy giveaway it's more like a cautious helping hand.



Designed to steady households still feeling the pinch from high prices, it mixes small tax cuts, modest welfare hikes and a few sweeteners for families and renters.

“A steady hand rather than a grand gesture — that’s Budget 2025 in a nutshell.”

Easing the Everyday Bills

Households will receive a €250 energy credit, split into two payments, and fuel allowance recipients get a €300 top-up. The reduced 9% VAT rate on gas and electricity stays until spring, while parents can expect some family-friendly perks:

- A €420 ‘baby bonus’ for newborns,
- Free schoolbooks for Leaving Cert students, and
- Free public transport for children aged 5–8.

They’re small moves, but they add up for homes juggling rising costs.

Tax Tweaks and Take-Home Pay

Middle earners get a bit more breathing room. The income tax band rises by €2,000, and the Universal Social Charge dips by 1%. Renters will welcome a bigger Rent Tax Credit — now €1,000 per person (or €2,000 for couples) — while new homeowners benefit from extended mortgage relief.

If you’re earning the minimum wage, that also climbs to €13.50 an hour, helping lower-income workers keep pace with inflation.

Welfare & Public Spending

Core social welfare payments increase by €12 per week, while the Government commits €10.5 billion to infrastructure, housing, transport and healthcare. It’s a “steady growth” budget — not revolutionary but aimed at improving services over time.

The Catch

Energy supports are smaller than last year, and several benefits — Child Benefit, Living Alone and Fuel Allowance — are frozen. Critics say inflation will eat into these gains, leaving some pensioners and low-income households no better off.

Winners:

- Working families and renters
- Parents with school-age kids

- Minimum-wage earners

Losers (relatively):

- Pensioners and fixed-income households
- Drivers and smokers (carbon & excise hikes)
- Low earners with little or no tax liability

Bottom Line

For most of us, Budget 2025 means a small but welcome lift — a little extra in pay packets, slightly smaller bills, and a few family perks.

But it won’t transform household budgets overnight. It’s a careful step forward, not a leap — and for many, the squeeze isn’t over yet.

A promotional advertisement for 'RICHARD'S TYRES'. The top part shows a red car and a white van with the company logo. Below this, the text reads: 'RICHARD'S TYRES', 'MOBILE TYRE FITTING WE COME TO YOU!', 'Professional tyre fitting at your home/work', 'Supply Budget, Mid-range & Premium New Tyres', 'Mobile Tyre fitting car, van, SUV', 'Premium New tyres Budget New tyres', 'Puncture Repairs Wheel balancing'. At the bottom, a black box contains the phone number '089 466 2018' and the website 'mobiletyreunit.com'.

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Cllr. Ted LEDDY

November Update



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

Granard Bridge (Humpback Bridge)

I am very pleased that after many years of campaigning Fingal Co Council have presented a proposal to make the humpback bridge between Castleknock and Blanchardstown significantly safer. The proposal includes a new outer bridge for pedestrians and cyclists which would allow them to access Castleknock Train station in a easier and safer way. To view this proposal in detail log onto "Fingal Consult" where you can leave comments up until November 7th.



Porterstown Park Run

I was delighted to recently attend the 10th Anniversary of the Porterstown Park Run. It was a tremendous occasion and a great reminder of the contribution that the run makes toward the community. I want to sincerely thank the many volunteers who make it such a special weekly event. (pictured with Mayor of Fingal Councillor Tom O'Leary)



St Brigids GAA Club

Congratulations to St Brigids GAA Club on the opening of their new state of the art All Weather Pitch. It was a pleasure to attend the opening along with An Taoiseach Michael Martin, my political colleagues and many club members. It is another great example of fundraising and the Sports Capital Grants program coming together to deliver top class facilities.



KELLYSTOWN

New graveyard

I am very pleased that after multiple delays the new graveyard in Kellystown is now under construction. The Graveyard, located between Porterstown Road and the Maynooth rail line will contain 3000 burial plots and 500 columbarium wall plots. The graveyard will be completed and open for use early next year.



BOARDS AND COMMITTEES I SERVE ON

- Housing Strategic Policy Committee
- Blanchardstown Drugs and Alcohol Task Force
- Homestart Community Creche Blakestown
- President Castleknock Lions Club
- Chair Castleknock Village Festival Committee



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HOPE FOR REOPENING OF DEDICATED SCRAMBLER PARK

I am grateful to my colleagues for unanimously agreeing my motion for Fingal County Council to fund an insurance package for a motorbike club located in Mulhuddart, Dublin 15 to enable owners of scramblers in the local area to practice riding safely away from footpaths, parks and streets where there have been a lot of accidents and anti-social behaviour. I am working with stakeholders of the club and council managers to facilitate the re-establishment of the club to ensure that we can safely divert the activities of scrambler riders to something more sustainable and productive.

Electric Scrambler Bike | Reviewmotors.co

BEWLEY'S BIG COFFEE MORNING FOR ST FRANCIS HOSPICE

Congratulations are in order for St Francis Hospice Dublin Blanchardstown on their very successful Bewley's Big Coffee Morning event recently. Many thanks to all the organisations and guests who turned out en-masse to support a great cause. Lovely to meet and chat with so many wonderful volunteers, families, staff and Fr. Dan Joe. Well done everyone involved.



LAUNCH OF D15 RECOVERY WALK

A group of people posing for a photo

I represented the Mayor of Fingal at the launch of the D15 Recovery Walk recently. The walk from the Blakestown Mountview Youth Initiative (BMYI) to the Tolka River Project in D15 was organised by the D15 Community Drugs Task Force Team to mark International Recovery Month -September. The walk provided an opportunity to celebrate recovery, reduce stigma, and demonstrate that recovery is not only possible but thriving in our communities. Many thanks to all the services and volunteers that helped organise the Recovery Walk.

PHOENIX FM ANNIVERSARY

Delighted to join many members of the Dublin 15 Community to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of 92.5 Phoenix FM in the Draiocht Blanchardstown yesterday. It was heartening to listen to the history of the community radio and the fantastic contribution of the dedicated volunteers who have the station from its small beginnings to the centre piece of community life. Congratulations to all at Phoenix FM.

SAFER TOGETHER BLANCHARDSTOWN FESTIVAL

Delighted to attend the Safer Together Blanchardstown Festival in the Millennium Park recently. Lovely to join many residents in attendance to celebrate the wonderful cohesion, cooperation and coexistence in Dublin 15. Thanks to Phillip Jennings and the team of dedicated volunteers for the great atmosphere, musical performances, stalls, and the star attraction - fun colour run. There is plenty of credit to go round for the success of the event. Well done.

Corduff Park Upgrade Works

A contract has been awarded for the approved works related to significant improvements to this park including an extension to the All-weather Pitch, new playground, new car park and improved paths and community garden. The works will commence on site in late 2025 and progress to completion during 2026.



TAKING IN CHARGE

Delighted to have put in representations for the estates listed below to be officially Taken in Charge in 2025. This means that Fingal County Council now has responsibility for the maintenance of the roads, footpaths, and public areas associated with the housing estates, ensuring that they meet standards.

Mount Eustace Estate, Tyrrelstown, Dublin 15
Cruise Park Estate, Tyrrelstown, Dublin 15
Bellingsmore Estate, Kilmartin, Dublin 15
Heathfield Estate, Cappagh, Dublin 11

MELVILLE ROAD PYLON BEAUTIFICATION GARDEN

Happy to commend the operations department of Fingal County Council for the exquisite roadside garden around the twin pylon beside the Deputy Mayors Pub along Melville Road, Dublin 11 which I requested. I recommend a visit to the site. roads, footpaths, and public areas associated with the housing estates, ensuring that they meet standards.

Mount Eustace Estate, Tyrrelstown, Dublin 15
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Happy to commend the operations department of Fingal County Council for the exquisite roadside garden around the twin pylon beside the Deputy Mayors Pub along Melville Road, Dublin 11 which I requested. I recommend a visit to the site.

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Cllr Gerard Sheehan: “Scrap Carer’s Allowance Means Test”

Dublin 15, 21 AOctober 2025

Aontú Councillor Gerard Sheehan has today called on the Government to immediately scrap the “unfair and discriminatory” means test for the Carer’s Allowance, following the revelation that over a third of all applications are being denied annually, with rejection rates set to increase this year.

Aontú is calling on the Government to scrap the means test for the Carer’s Allowance, after new figures revealed that 37% of applications are being rejected each year.

“These rejection figures are extraordinary and show that too many carers are still being locked out of support they deserve. The means test is unfair and discriminatory, especially towards women who are refused based on a partner’s income. The Government must act now, not wait until 2029, to end this system,”

Cllr Emer Tóibín said.

The Carer’s Allowance provides between €260 and €447 a week, but anyone earning over €625 a week (single) or €1,250 (couple) is excluded under the current rules.

In the lead-up to the Carer’s Referendum in March 2024, the Government went to great



lengths to downplay the impact of its proposal and its efforts to reduce their responsibility for carers across the country. Thankfully, the public saw through it and delivered a resounding No at the ballot box.

Following that vote, Aontú and members of the Regional Technical Group introduced a Dáil motion calling for the abolition of the Carer’s Allowance means test by 2027. At the time, the Government did not oppose this motion and offered reassurance that it would work towards that 2027 target, a commitment it must now honour.

“It is a well established fact that carers save the State millions every year. They deserve fairness, not rejection letters,” Cllr Tóibín added. ***Do it. Now.”***





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Even running low for a few minutes can cause catastrophic engine damage.

TOO MUCH OIL

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If there's too much oil:

The crankshaft can whip the oil into foam, reducing lubrication.

It can **cause excess pressure**, leading to oil leaks or blown seals which will size engine parts.

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3. Check your oil before long trips — especially if your car is older.

In short:

Too little oil = immediate, severe engine damage.

Too much oil = harmful over time and can still cause major issues.



Fuel Lines: Why Irish Drivers Are Heading North for Cheaper Petrol

If you've noticed a stream of cars heading towards Newry, Derry, or Enniskillen on a Saturday morning, you're not imagining things.

With petrol and diesel prices climbing again across the Republic, Irish drivers are crossing the border in their thousands — not for shopping this time, but for cheaper fuel.

In 2025, the price gap between filling up in Louth and topping up in Armagh has widened once more — and for many, it's worth the trip.

The Price Divide

At the start of autumn 2025, the average price of unleaded petrol in the Republic hovered around €1.85–€1.90 per litre, while Northern Ireland stations averaged roughly £1.39–£1.45 (or about €1.62–€1.68 after conversion).

That difference might seem small — but on a full tank, it can mean savings of €8–€12, and even more for diesel drivers. For families or commuters who drive daily, those euros add up quickly.

"People plan their shop around it," says Declan Byrne, who manages a forecourt in Dundalk.

"They'll fill the car, grab groceries in Newry, and make a day of it. We just can't compete."

Why the Gap Exists

Several factors drive the difference:

- Excise duty and carbon tax remain higher in the Republic.
- Currency fluctuations between the euro and sterling affect pump prices.
- Northern Ireland stations often buy in cheaper wholesale fuel due to UK tax structures and logistics.

While the Government in Dublin reintroduced some fuel excise duties that had been cut during the cost-of-living crisis, many motorists feel the timing couldn't be worse.

"Our costs are up — everything from school books to groceries," says Mary Quinn from Cavan. "You can't blame people for driving 20 minutes to save €10 on a tank."

Border Blues

For petrol stations along the southern side of the border, the exodus hurts.

In towns like Castleblayney, Carrickmacross, and Buncrana, once-bustling forecourts are quieter, while their Northern counterparts are thriving.

Some stations are diversifying — opening cafés, adding electric vehicle chargers, and promoting Irish-sourced fuels to hold on to customers. But it's an uphill battle.

"We used to see Northern drivers coming south for cheaper diesel," says Sean McGee, who runs a station near Clones. "Now it's the other way round. It's flipped completely."

The Road Ahead

Economists say the trend will continue as long as there's a meaningful price gap.

And while electric vehicle uptake is rising, for most rural Irish households, diesel and petrol are still daily necessities — not luxuries.

The result? Cross-border fuel tourism is back, echoing the shopping trips of the early 2000s. It's good news for Northern retailers, but a slow bleed for forecourts on this side of the line.

The Everyday Reality

Back in Louth, Declan shrugs as another convoy of southern plates rolls past toward Newry.

"We're proud of our customers," he says. "We just wish we could serve them without sending them across the border."

For now, the tank may be full — but for many Irish petrol stations, the future feels like it's running on fumes.



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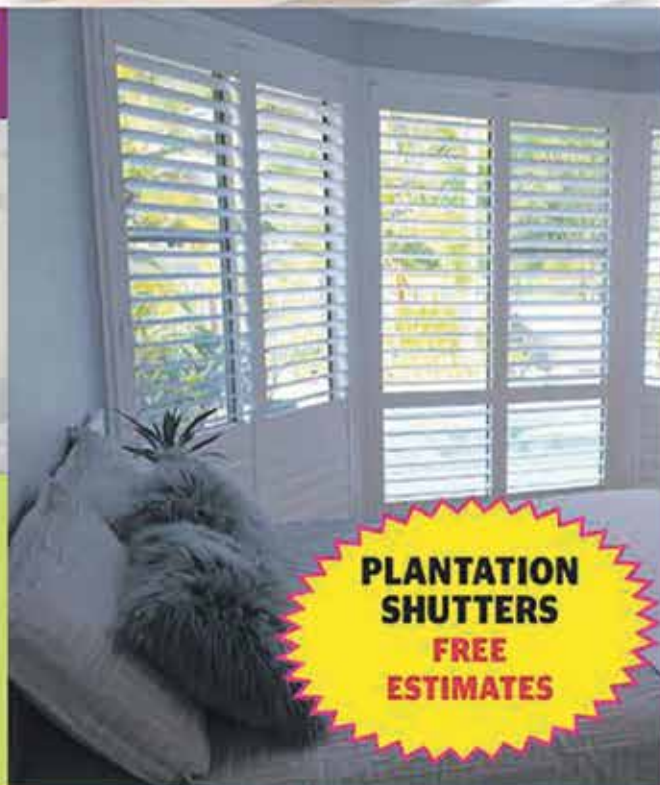
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HOMES WITH HEART: INSIDE D15'S DESIGN REVOLUTION

Across Dublin 15, something subtle but beautiful is happening behind front doors.



In the family estates of Castleknock, Clonsilla, and Ongar, a new generation of homeowners is reimagining the classic 1990s semi-D — and turning it into a space that feels calm, modern, and deeply personal.

Once defined by magnolia walls and pine kitchens, the suburban home has found new life in soft greys, warm oaks, and clean, clever design. It's not about showing off — it's about living better.

From “Grand Designs” to Real Homes

Blanchardstown interior designer Lisa Kavanagh has watched the trend grow.

“People want homes that feel like them — not like a showhouse,” she says.

“In D15, that means open spaces for family life, simple materials, and warm textures. Function comes first, but with personality.”

Her latest projects include transforming box rooms into hybrid work-and-wellness spaces and adding statement shelving to once-plain living rooms.

Paint shades like RAL 7046 grey, oak worktops, and brass accents are proving favourites — timeless but far from boring.

The New Heart of the Home

The kitchen remains the emotional anchor. Instead of glossy white units, D15 families are choosing muted tones, mirrored splashbacks, and integrated wine coolers. Soft LED lighting under floating shelves has become the modern version of the Aga glow.

“Lighting has changed everything,” says David O’Brien, a Carpenterstown cabinet-maker. “A simple LED strip can make a kitchen feel like a cocktail bar after dark — people love that flexibility.”

And it's not just kitchens. Home bars, built-in seating, and multi-use storage walls are replacing clutter with calm. Even the smallest spaces are getting thoughtful makeovers.

Sustainability Meets Style

The design shift isn't just aesthetic — it's environmental.

Homeowners are re-using oak tops, upcycling vintage furniture, and choosing low-VOC paints and local craftspeople

over flat-pack imports.

Kavanagh says, “There's pride in keeping it local — from custom shelves built in Blanchardstown to handmade tiles from Kildare. It feels rooted.”

The D15 Design Mindset

The new D15 style is less about perfection and more about purpose: cosy, functional, sustainable, and personal.

It's design with heart — made not for Instagram, but for living. And that's what makes it truly beautiful.

“When your home feels calm, you do too,” says Lisa. “That's

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D15 Design Trends to Watch in 2025

The key design trends for 2025 focus on creating calm, functional, and personalized spaces. The colour palette is shifting towards muted neutrals and earthy accents, using soft greys, warm sands, and gentle greens as a base. This can be authentically accented by incorporating local materials, such as Irish oak for shelves or handcrafted pottery.

Functionality is enhanced through layered lighting, which combines different types of illumination to adapt the mood throughout the day—a look easily achieved by installing discreet LED strips under cabinets. The demand for tidy, streamlined spaces is driving the trend for built-in and seamless storage, where clutter disappears behind custom-fitted units, perfect for a local joiner in areas like Blanchardstown or Castleknock to execute.

Flexibility is paramount, with multipurpose rooms that can transform from a home office by day into a yoga space by night, facilitated by lightweight screens and modular furniture. Underpinning all these trends is a strong preference for sustainable and local craft, prioritising recycled timber, low-VOC paint, and the work of Irish artisans over mass-produced imports—making it a perfect opportunity to seek out makers based in the local area for bespoke rugs, tiles, and other unique elements.

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The Hidden Heart of D15: Rediscovering the Royal Canal

If you follow the gentle curve of the Royal Canal from Castleknock to Clonsilla, you'll see why locals say it's the soul of Dublin 15. Once a working waterway for barges and trade, it's now a calm, green artery that carries walkers, cyclists, anglers and dreamers through the heart of the community.

For decades, the canal was overlooked — a quiet stretch of water glimpsed from passing trains or the towpath behind housing estates. But in recent years, something has shifted. The Royal Canal Greenway has given this historic route new life, turning it into one of the most loved weekend escapes in west Dublin.

A Walk Through History

Built in the late 1700s, the canal once connected Dublin to the Shannon — a lifeline of trade and transport. Today, the echoes of that past remain: stone bridges with century-old initials, lock-keeper cottages with ivy-clad walls, and the slow rhythm of the lock gates creaking open near Porterstown.

Local historian Tomás Byrne says,

"The canal tells the story of Dublin's growth — from industry to community. Every lock has a legend, every bend a memory."

Nature on the Doorstep

For local families, the canal has become an outdoor playground. Joggers share the path with children feeding ducks near Coolmine, while anglers cast quietly under the trees at Clonsilla. In summer, wildflowers edge the towpath and swans glide past reflections of new apartment blocks — the old and new Dublin meeting on still water.

The Greenway has also connected neighbourhoods like never before. Cyclists now ride safely from Ashtown to Maynooth, stopping at canal-side cafés for coffee and chat. It's a scene that would have been unimaginable twenty years ago.

What's Next

Plans under the Blue-Green Ring Masterplan promise to enhance this connection even further — creating continuous walking and cycling routes linking the canal with the Tolka Valley Park and Phoenix Park. Locals hope it will encourage more visitors, while preserving the peace that makes the area special.

The Soul of a Community

The Royal Canal isn't just a place to stretch your legs — it's where Dublin 15 comes together. Couples stroll hand in hand, kids race along the locks, and older residents pause to watch the sunset over the water.

It's proof that you don't need to go far to find beauty. Sometimes, the most inspiring places are the ones that have been quietly flowing past us all along.

"You can walk it in an hour," says Tomás, "but it'll stay with you all day."

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Smart Ireland: How Tech Is Quietly Transforming Our Homes and Habits



Once upon a time, “smart homes” sounded like something out of science fiction — or Silicon Valley. But in Ireland today, they’re quietly becoming part of everyday life.

From rural cottages to city apartments, more and more households are discovering that small bits of technology — from voice-activated lighting to intelligent heating systems — can make life simpler, greener, and even a little more joyful.

The Subtle Revolution

It’s not about robots or futuristic gadgets. The real Irish tech trend is practical, invisible convenience.

Smart thermostats like Google Nest or Hive, now standard in many Dublin homes, allow you to control your heating remotely — handy when you’re halfway down the M50 and remember you’ve left the immersion on.

Smart plugs, video doorbells, and energy monitors are quietly changing daily routines, helping families cut down on bills while giving peace of mind.

“It’s not flashy, it’s functional,” says Aidan Byrne, a Blanchardstown-based electrician who’s seen demand surge in the past two years. “People don’t want gimmicks — they want things that save them money and stress.”

Sustainability Meets Comfort

In a country where energy costs bite and weather can’t make up its mind, smart tech is becoming a key player in sustainability.

Solar-powered sensors, energy-efficient bulbs, and

timed sockets are helping Irish households lower emissions — one app at a time.

According to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), even basic automation can cut energy waste by up to 15%. For many homeowners, that’s reason enough to get smart.

Living Smarter, Not Louder

For design-conscious readers, the good news is that smart tech no longer means ugly cables or blinking boxes.

Irish interior designers are embracing “invisible integration” — discreet sensors, soft-touch switches, and minimalist devices that blend seamlessly into contemporary homes.

“The new luxury is quiet technology,” says interior stylist Niamh Kelly. “It’s about control without clutter — living smarter, not louder.”

Getting Started

If you’re curious but cautious, start small:

- Smart lighting:
Set evening moods or wake-up routines.
- Connected heating:
Adjust temperatures room-by-room.
- Voice assistants:
Hands-free timers, recipes, and reminders.
- Energy monitors:
Track where your electricity really goes.

With most devices now plug-and-play, you don't need to be a tech wizard — just a little curious.

The Irish Way Forward

As Ireland pushes toward greener, more energy-efficient living, technology isn't replacing tradition — it's adapting to it. The kettle still boils, the fire still glows — but now, we can check both from our phones.

And that's the beauty of it: technology that fits Irish life, not the other way around.

"The best tech doesn't shout," says Aidan. "It just quietly makes life better."

5 Easy Smart Upgrades for Irish Homes

You don't need a tech degree (or a big budget) to make your home smarter.

Here are five simple, affordable upgrades that work perfectly in Irish homes — from urban apartments to country cottages.

1. Smart Heating Controls

Devices like Google Nest, Hive, or Tado let you control your heating from your phone — ideal for unpredictable Irish weather.

SEAI estimates smart thermostats can save up to 15% on energy costs.

2. Energy-Saving Smart Plugs

Plug in lamps or appliances and schedule them to turn off automatically — no more wondering if you left the iron on.

3 LED Smart Bulbs

Set cosy evening light or bright morning wake-ups via your phone or voice assistant.

Works with Google Assistant, Alexa, or Apple Home — no electrician needed.

4 Video Doorbells & Security Cameras

Keep an eye on deliveries or visitors while you're away. Popular brands include Ring and Eufy, both with simple smartphone apps.

5 Smart Speakers & Voice Assistants

Add a Google Nest Mini or Amazon Echo Dot to your kitchen for hands-free timers, recipes, weather updates, and music.

Bonus: they double as your home's digital hub if you add more devices later.

Tip:

Check www.seai.ie for home energy grants that may cover smart heating or insulation — a great way to make your tech upgrades even greener.



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Mind Your Head: How Dublin 15 Is Putting Wellbeing First

In Dublin 15, a quiet revolution is taking place — one built not on politics or planning, but on kindness.

From Blanchardstown to Ongar, more people are speaking openly about mental health, and the community is rallying around them.

From Stigma to Support

Once a taboo subject, mental health is now part of daily conversation. Posters for wellbeing workshops and mindfulness classes dot shop windows and café walls.

At the centre of this movement is Jigsaw Blanchardstown, a free support service for young people aged 12–25.

Manager Patricia McGovern says that increased demand reflects progress as much as pressure:

“More young people are reaching out early — before things get worse. That shows the stigma is lifting.”

Schools have joined the effort too. Castleknock College now includes mindfulness breaks during exams, while Luttrellstown Community College runs lunchtime wellbeing clubs that encourage students to talk and de-stress.

Community Strength

Sports clubs and local groups are playing their part. Castleknock GAA and St Brigid's have embraced the GAA Healthy Club Programme, running “Talk and Walk” evenings and mental-fitness workshops.

Coach Paul O'Neill says the impact is clear:

“After training, lads hang around to chat. It's normal now to say if you're struggling. That's real progress.”

Cafés such as Grounds Coffeehouse and The Local Kitchen are also lending a hand, hosting informal discussions for parents and teens during Mental Health Week.

Small Acts, Big Difference

Not every act of care needs an organisation behind it. A neighbour's check-in, a walk along the Royal Canal, or volunteering at the Blanchardstown Centre



for Independent Living can make all the difference.

“Connection is medicine,” says local counsellor Deirdre Hanlon. “You don't have to fix everything alone — community is where healing starts.”

The D15 Way

Dublin 15's message is simple: you're not alone.

With sports clubs, schools and cafés uniting around wellbeing, the area is showing what true community looks like — people looking out for one another.

“When you walk into a club or café here now,” Patricia says, “you feel it — people care. That's what real strength is.”

Where to Get Help in Dublin 15

If you or someone you know is struggling, there's support close to home — and it's confidential, free, and judgement-free.

Jigsaw Blanchardstown

Support for young people aged 12–25 and their families.

Blanchardstown Centre, Dublin 15

www.jigsaw.ie/blanchardstown

01 890 5810

Blanchardstown Centre for Independent Living (CIL)

Peer support and community activities for people living with disability or long-term health issues.

www.blanchardstowncil.ie

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Local GAA Healthy Club Programmes

Many clubs in Castleknock, St Brigid's, and Ongar run “Talk & Walk” events and wellbeing evenings — check your club's social pages for upcoming sessions.



Cllr. Siobhan SHOVLIN PC



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Dear Resident,

I hope you are keeping well. Please see information below on various council related pieces of news and information. As always, if I can be of assistance, do let me know.

Best Wishes,

Siobhan



LAUREL LODGE PLAYGROUND

Work is scheduled to commence on Laurel Lodge Playground on 15th of October.

LEAF SWEEPER AND BAGS

It is that time of year again when you may need the road sweeper to visit your neighbourhood. Please let me know if you would like me to request the council to do this. Also, if you require bags from the council for leaves, please do let me know.



COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PROGRAMME

The above scheme will open for grant applications end October. I was delighted to see local GAA clubs St. Brigid's and Castleknock GAA awarded funds from this in 2024. Over €1m will be available for community groups, organisations and sports clubs etc. to apply for grants for Climate Actions to reduce emissions and to increase biodiversity.



CONGRATULATIONS TO ST. MOCHTA'S FC AND VERONA FC

who were recommended the following funding at our recent council meeting, €1,480 for Bazooka football goals and €4,000 for football goals. If your group would like to find out more about the sports funding available, do let me know.

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The Future Is Irish: Meet the Innovators Shaping Tomorrow's Tech

If you think the future of technology belongs to Silicon Valley, think again.

Across Ireland — from Dublin Docklands to Galway Bay — a new generation of innovators is proving that the next big idea might just come with an Irish accent.

They're not wearing lab coats or hiding behind jargon. They're teachers, engineers, coders, and dreamers — ordinary people using technology to make everyday life smarter, healthier, and more human.

Tech with Heart

In Dublin's Digital Hub, Siobhán Dunne, founder of HearMe, is building an AI-powered app that checks in on users' mood through voice tone and offers personalised wellbeing support.

"We wanted to make mental health help feel like a friend, not a form," she says.

"The goal isn't to replace human connection — it's to spark it."

Her startup has already partnered with several Irish universities to pilot the app among students, tackling stress before it spirals.

Innovation in the Fields

Meanwhile, in the heart of the Midlands, Tom Kearney, a second-generation farmer turned technologist, is turning data into sustainability. His company AgriFlow uses solar-powered sensors to monitor soil health, rainfall, and energy use.

"We're proving that technology doesn't have to mean screens and servers," Tom says.

"It can mean cleaner rivers, better yields, and smarter land use."

AgriFlow's software is now helping co-ops across

Offaly and Westmeath cut fertiliser waste by up to 20% — a win for both farmers and the environment.

Galway's Green Dream

Out west, Maeve Ní Riain is leading a team of engineers designing ocean-powered energy turbines for coastal villages. Her start-up BlueVolt hopes to make small-scale, community-owned power a reality.

"We've always had the wind and the waves," she laughs. "Now we have the technology to use them wisely."

Her work has caught EU attention — and might just redefine how Ireland uses its greatest natural resource: the sea.

The Human Side of Irish Tech

What unites these innovators isn't just code or capital — it's care. Each one is driven by a distinctly Irish blend of curiosity and community spirit. They're not chasing headlines; they're solving real problems for real people.

From AI to agritech, healthtech to renewable energy, Ireland is quietly carving its place in the future — one smart, empathetic idea at a time.

"The Irish tech scene has heart," says Siobhán. "And that's our competitive edge."

The Takeaway

Ireland's next wave of innovation isn't about gadgets — it's about goodness. It's about making life easier, greener, and more connected, while keeping the values that define us: warmth, wit, and creativity.

The future isn't coming — it's already here.

And it's unmistakably Irish.



WHAT'S REALLY ON THE BOTTLE? IRELAND'S NEW ALCOHOL LABELS EXPLAINED

If you like to unwind with a glass of wine or enjoy a quiet pint, there's a big change coming to the way your favourite drink looks on the shelf.

Ireland is the first country in the EU to take a bold step toward telling the full story of alcohol — right there on the bottle.

A New Kind of Label

Under the Public Health (Alcohol) (Labelling) Regulations 2023, every beer, wine, cider, and spirit sold in Ireland will eventually carry new health information. The aim? To give drinkers the same kind of transparency they already expect on food packaging.

That means your next bottle of wine won't just tell you how strong it is — it will also spell out exactly how many grams of alcohol it contains and the calories inside.

And that's just the start. Labels will also feature a series of health warnings, including:

- The general dangers of alcohol use
- The risks of drinking during pregnancy
- A clear statement linking alcohol consumption with fatal cancers
- A reminder of its role in liver disease

Each label must also point readers toward AskAboutAlcohol.ie, a public-health website with information and support. Even pubs and bars will be expected to display similar health messages — so the message won't end at the supermarket shelf.

Why the Change?

Supporters say the move brings alcohol into line with the rest of our shopping basket. Just as we've grown used to calorie counts on sandwiches or sugar warnings on soft drinks, these new labels are meant to spark more mindful drinking and make the health risks impossible to ignore.

The World Health Organization has hailed Ireland's plan as a landmark for public health — the first of its kind in Europe.

Not So Fast

While the law is on the books, it won't hit bottles straight away. The rules were due to take effect in May 2026, but in mid-2025 the Government signalled that enforcement could be pushed back to 2029.

For now, that means most drinks will stay as they are, while producers and importers gear up for the shift.

Clashing with Europe

The new labels go further than EU law currently requires. Across the rest of Europe, alcohol over 1.2% ABV doesn't need to list calories, ingredients or nutrition details. Ireland's rules carve out an exception — and not everyone's pleased about it.



Some drinks companies have warned of trade headaches, extra printing costs, and confusion for exporters. Others see it as a chance for Ireland to lead the way toward a Europe-wide standard.

What It Means for You

When the changes finally arrive, every bottle, can, and cocktail on Irish shelves will carry clearer information than ever before. You'll know how strong your drink really is, how many calories it adds to your night, and exactly what risks come with it.

Whether you see it as a warning, a wake-up call, or just another label, one thing's certain: the humble drinks label is about to get a lot more honest.

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- Our meeting is OPEN to anyone interested in learning about AA and how we help others affected by alcoholism.
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THE STORY OF THE BRIDGE OF TEARS

The Bridge of Tears (Droichead na nDeor) in County Donegal is one of the most poignant emigration landmarks in Ireland.

It's a small stone bridge on the road between Dunfanaghy and Falcarragh, near the foot of Muckish Mountain. In the 18th and 19th centuries, when emigration from Donegal to America, Canada, Australia, and Scotland was at its height, local families would travel with their loved ones as far as this bridge.

From there, the emigrants would continue on to Derry (Londonderry) to board ships, while the family would return home. The bridge became the symbolic "last stop" where parents, brothers, sisters, and friends said their final goodbyes.

For many, this was truly the last farewell, as letters were slow and uncertain, and the vast majority of emigrants never returned to Donegal. The grief of parting was so deep that the place became known as the Bridge of Tears.

Today there is a memorial plaque at the site in both Irish and English. It reads:

"This bridge was so called because of the number of emigrants who crossed it during the famine years. It was here that they parted from their friends and relatives, many of whom they would never see again."

The bridge has become a place of memory not only for Donegal families but also for the wider Irish diaspora, symbolising the sorrow of emigration that shaped so much of Ireland's history.

The Bridge of Tears: Donegal's Last Farewell

On the winding road between Dunfanaghy and Falcarragh, at the foot of mighty Muckish Mountain, lies a modest stone bridge with a name that carries centuries of sorrow — the Bridge of Tears (Droichead na nDeor).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Donegal families walked this

way with their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, who were leaving for distant shores. For those bound for Derry, where ships waited to carry them to America, Canada, Scotland or Australia, this bridge marked a turning point. Families would go no further.

Here, at this lonely crossing, came the final embraces, whispered blessings, and the heartbreaking realisation that, for most, this parting was permanent. Letters travelled slowly, and the cost of return was beyond reach. Parents knew they would never again see the children they held close on the Bridge of Tears.

During the Great Famine (1845–1852), these goodbyes grew more frequent and more desperate. Hunger forced thousands from Donegal's rugged hillsides and coastal villages. The bridge echoed with grief as generations of emigrants departed, carrying with them not just hopes of survival, but the weight of their families' love.

Today, the bridge remains much as it was then — quiet, unassuming, and powerful in its simplicity. A plaque, inscribed in Irish and English, reminds visitors:

"This bridge was so called because of the number of emigrants who crossed it during the famine years. It was here that they parted from their friends and relatives, many of whom they would never see again."

Surrounded by the rolling Donegal landscape, the Bridge of Tears is more than a relic. It is a place of memory for the Irish diaspora, a symbol of all the partings that shaped our nation. Visitors who pause here can almost feel the footsteps of those who walked before — the weight of farewell, and the tears that gave this bridge its name.



Top Christmas Markets in Ireland 2025

Market	Location	Expected / Confirmed Dates	Highlights / Notes
Galway Christmas Market	Eyre Square, Galway	14 November 2025 to 4 January 2026	One of the longest-running and largest markets. Dozens of wooden chalets, food stalls, rides, and festive ambience.
Dublin Castle Christmas Market	Dublin city centre	27 November to 17 December 2025 (likely)	In the castle grounds. Free admission and a compact but festive setup.
Winterval	Waterford	21 November to 23 December 2025	A major festival combining Christmas markets, entertainment, lights, and family events.
Yulefest Kilkenny	Kilkenny	29 November to 23 December 2025	Includes markets, Santa's arrival, weekend festivities, music, and crafts.
Swords Castle Christmas Market	Swords, Co. Dublin	29–30 November and 6–7 December 2025 (weekend markets)	A local Fingal market held in the castle grounds; mix of indoor & outdoor stalls.
Cork Christmas / "Corkmas" & Marina Market	Cork city	From ~14 November through mid-December (dates TBC)	Includes city centre stalls, a Ferris wheel, carousels, and more at Marina Market and Emmet Place.
Stillgarden Christmas Market	Stillgarden Distillery, near Dublin	6 December 2025, 11:00–17:00	A one-day pop-up market at the distillery, free entry.

Tips & Observations for 2025

- Start mid-November: Most markets begin in mid-November and run until late December or early January.
- Galway leads the pack: Its market extends into January, making it ideal for late-season visits.
- Free admission in many cases: Markets like Dublin Castle expect to remain free to enter.
- Weekend & seasonal markets: Smaller markets (like Swords Castle) operate over specific weekends rather than full spans.

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- Special Needs & Classroom Assistant Primary & Post Primary

Science

- Pre-University Science
- Pre-University Agricultural Science
- Pre-University Biomedical & Pharmaceutical Science
- Pre-University Forensic Science
- Pre-University Environmental
- Pre-University Science with Sports
- Pre-University Food Science & Nutrition
- Pre-University Physiotherapy Science

Law & Politics

- Pre-University Law
- Pre-University Law with Politics
- Pre-University Business Law
- Pre-University Politics, Economics & Social Science

Arts

- Pre-University Arts
- Pre-University Liberal Arts
- Musical Theatre **NEW**

Animal/Equine

- Equine Studies
- Pre-University Animal Science
- Advanced Equine Studies
- Advanced Animal Science
- Animal Care Assistant



Engineering & Construction

- Pre-University Engineering
- Pre-University Construction/Furniture Studies **NEW**

Business & Accountancy

- Pre-University Business
- Advanced Pre-University Business
- Human Resource Management
- Pre-University Business, Finance & Accounting
- Accounting Technician Apprenticeship
- Auctioneering, Valuation & Estate Agency
- Office Administration - Legal & Medical Secretary
- Office Accounts & Administration
- Hospitality & Business with Event Management
- Pre-University Marketing & Public Relations

Computing & Technology

- Software Development & Games Design
- Pre-University Computer Networks & Cyber Security
- Graphic Design with Digital Media
- Mobile App Development
- Augmented & Virtual Reality

Visual Art & Design

- Art & Design with Portfolio
- Animation
- Higher National Diploma In The Animation Industry
- Graphic Design with Digital Media
- Architectural Technology & Design

Music & Sound

- Music Performance
- Sound Production
- Higher National Diploma in Artist Development for Musicians
- Higher National Diploma in Sound Engineering

Film & Media

- Media & Film Production
- Higher National Diploma in Film Production
- Journalism

Hospitality & Tourism

- Hospitality & Business
- Tourism & Airline Studies
- Culinary Techniques
- Advanced Professional Cookery

Beauty & Hairdressing

- Beauty Therapy
- Pre-Apprenticeship Hairdressing
- Hairdressing Apprenticeship
- Advanced Beauty Therapy
- Barbering **NEW**

Sports

- Pre-University PE Teaching & Coaching
- Sports Management with Business
- Personal Training & Fitness Instruction
- Sports Rehabilitation & Physiotherapy Assistant

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Bohermeen Student Wins Top Prize at Irish Skills Competition in Beauty Therapy

23rd Sept 2025: Ella Graham Harvey, a student at Dunboyne College of Further Education and Training (DCFET), has been crowned winner of the prestigious World Skills Ireland competition 2025.



Representing her college with professionalism, precision, and creativity Ella competed against the top emerging beauty therapists from across the country in the RDS last week and brought home the coveted national title.

A native of Bohermeen, Navan, Co. Meath, Ella showcased exceptional skill and dedication in a series of challenging practical tasks, ranging from skincare and makeup to advanced techniques in nail care and facial massage. Worldskills Ireland is a partnership between enterprise, industry, education, training and government that raises the profile and recognition of skills and apprenticeships and prepares the talent of today for the careers of the future. The Irish Skills Competition is recognised nationally for promoting excellence in vocational education and training, with beauty therapy being one of the most competitive categories.

Speaking after the win, Ella can't believe her success.

"It still feels surreal. I've worked so hard over the past year, and to have it all come together on such a big stage is just amazing. I'm so grateful to Nicola Clarke and Ammanda Moore, my tutors in DCFET for all their support. This experience has truly boosted my confidence and shown me how far dedication can take you."

Nicola Clarke, Beauty Therapy Department in Dunboyne College, praised her Ella's commitment and work ethic. "From the beginning, Ella showed exceptional drive and passion for beauty therapy. She consistently went above and beyond in both her practical and theoretical work. Winning this competition is no easy feat — it requires precision, creativity, and professionalism — all of which she demonstrated in abundance. We're incredibly proud of her here at DCFET. Her success is a testament to the opportunities available through further education and training in Ireland, and it highlights the growing development of our Beauty Therapy courses here in Dunboyne."

Amanda Moore, Beauty Therapy Tutor in DCFET praised Ella for her team spirit "Ella, is very hardworking, helpful, and always giving 100%! She was a real player and is a true inspiration to her peers and a star in the making."

The win not only places Ella among the elite of her field in Ireland but also opens up opportunities to participate at an international competition. The Irish Skills Competition often acts as a gateway to the WorldSkills and EuroSkills platforms, where top vocational students represent Ireland on a global stage. Ella is currently continuing her studies in Advanced Beauty Therapy in Dunboyne College. She is employed as a Beauty Therapist in Glamour Geek Athboy.



Pictured at a presentation to mark the success of Ella Graham Harvey, Dunboyne College student who won the World Skills Ireland competition in Beauty Therapy are Amanda Moore, Beauty Therapy Dept DCFET, Cllr Nick Killian, Chairperson LMETB & DCFET Board, Ella Graham Harvey, World Skills winner, Catherine Fox, Principal, DCFET and Nicola Clarke, Beauty Therapy Dept DCFET

Dublin Baby Sensory Classes Raise Funds for The Gavin Glynn Foundation This Halloween

This Halloween, Baby Sensory Dublin City & Northside will once again turn its much-loved “Baby Pumpkin” classes into a celebration of community, compassion, and giving back - all in support of The Gavin Glynn Foundation.

The special Halloween sessions, led by long-time class leader and franchise owner Ruth Sweeney, invite parents and babies to dress up, have fun, and make a small donation to support Irish families whose children need to travel overseas for vital medical treatment. It's a cause that holds deep personal meaning for Ruth and her local Baby Sensory community.

Ruth, who has been running Baby Sensory classes for more than six years, recalled how one of her class families inspired her ongoing fundraising efforts.

“In 2022, a lovely mum named Elaine attended Baby Sensory with her baby daughter, Ailbhe,” Ruth explained. “Shortly after Ailbhe graduated from our classes, she was diagnosed with Retinoblastoma, tumours at the back of her eye. This type of cancer is so rare that the treatment she needed wasn't available in Ireland, so her family had to travel to the UK. The Gavin Glynn Foundation stepped in and arranged everything, from travel to accommodation, so the family could focus entirely on Ailbhe's care. No parent should have to face that kind of stress alone.”

Today, Ailbhe's tumours are stable, but she and her family still need to travel to England for treatment. Up to now, that has added up to more than forty round trips, all organised by the Gavin Glynn Foundation.

Touched by their story, Ruth decided to dedicate her annual Halloween fundraiser to the foundation. Since then, her Baby Pumpkin classes have raised almost €1,000 for the charity, with all proceeds going directly towards travel, accommodation, and living costs for families facing similar challenges.

While Baby Sensory is known for its research-based activities that support early development and bonding, Ruth believes that the sense of community it fosters is equally powerful. “Our classes are full of laughter, learning, and connection, not just for babies, but for parents too,” she said. “When something like this touches our group, everyone rallies around. That's what makes this community so special.”

Now thriving despite losing sight in one eye, little Ailbhe continues to inspire Ruth and the families who attend her



sessions. Each donation collected this October will help ensure that more children like her receive the care they need.

Ruth added, “The Gavin Glynn Foundation gives families hope when they're at their most vulnerable. It's a privilege to support them, and I know our Baby Sensory families will be as generous and kind-hearted as ever this Halloween.”

Families wishing to contribute to the fundraiser can contact Baby Sensory Dublin City & Northside directly for more information on www.babysensory.ie/dublincity-northside.

ABOUT

WOW World Group is an award-winning family of early years educational franchises operating across multiple countries. Its brands specialise in immersive, sensory-rich classes that support learning and development from birth to five years of age - giving children a play-based education that lays the foundation for lifelong learning.

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