

IRISH COUNTRYLIVING

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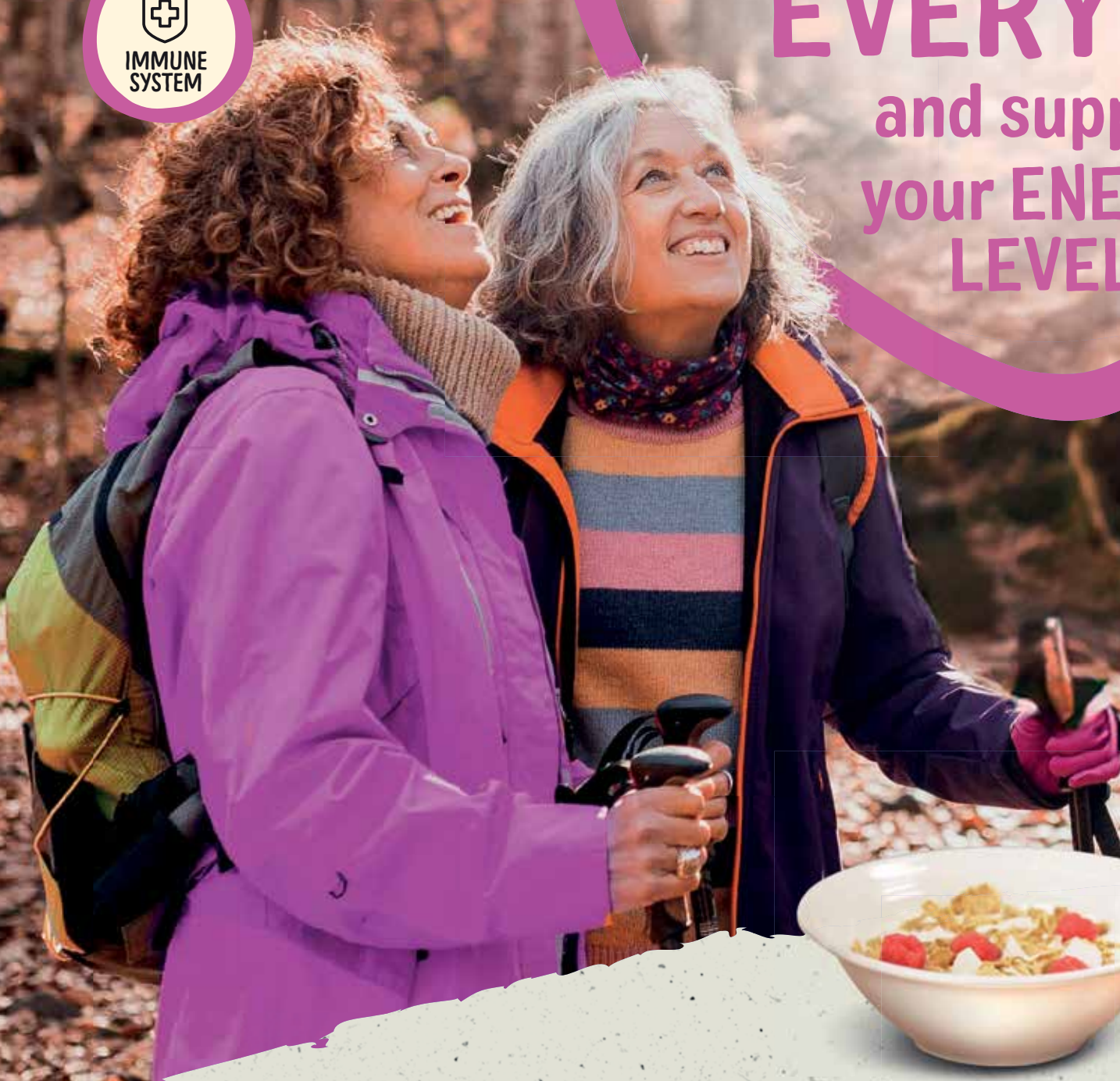
Ciara O'Brien turned a vacant
19th-century farmhouse
into a vibrant B&B in Cork





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'Building a home in rural Ireland – road frontage is no longer the sexy term it used to be'

A home to call your own. For many, it is the ultimate goal, the life dream. Making that dream a reality however, is not without its challenges. Whether it's raising the deposit, securing a mortgage or finding the right one for you, the headache of finding a home is a rite of passage for many – although one that young people are finding harder to attain.

For many farming families and those living in rural areas, it starts with the land. You'll find a copy of the *Agricultural Land Report 2024* free within this week's paper. This 72-page report is one of the most comprehensive pieces published by the *Irish Farmers Journal* each year, in which we collate land prices in every county, through consultation with auctioneers. Well done to Paul Mooney who has spent months collating and analysing the data.

The headline figure is that land prices rose by 5% in 2024, now sitting at a national average price of €12,515/ac. While the Land Report is always a piece of juicy reading for farmers eager to know what their farm is worth, it's also very relevant to those who wish to build a home in rural Ireland, especially given our nation's housing crisis.

Unfortunately, planning permission has become increasingly difficult to obtain in recent years. As a result, young people are looking at their family's land with dreams of a home of their own. However, for many there will be no foundations laid in the foreseeable future.

This is the reality for one lady, featured on page 22 of the Land Report. Preferring to remain anonymous, she told Jacqueline Hogge that she obtained planning permission to build a modest home on her family's farm in Connemara in 2006. However, her circumstances changed and she couldn't go ahead with the build. In 2021, she reapplied with a new planning application but met hurdle after hurdle. Now, in 2025, she still has not obtained planning, having spent nearly €15,000 on the process.

This planning situation is impacting land prices. Road frontage is no longer the sexy term it was once was – it means very little these days with planning so hard to come by. Instead, it's the old derelict cottage that is driving up prices. Not only is planning easier to obtain, there is also a potential €50,000 on the table in the form of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant. Paul Mooney outlines that an old house that five years ago added €40,000 to the value of land, can now increase it by as much as €100,000, depending on the local county council.

In light of all this, we are launching the *Agricultural Land Report 2024* this year in conjunction an eight-week series called, 'Building a home in rural Ireland'. The series led by Jacqueline Hogge will look at rural planning guides (page 12), pre-planning meetings and grants, as well as practical areas to consider in terms of securing a mortgage for your build, the design and heating systems. Planning and building a home is never an easy process but we hope our research and advice will help readers navigate the journey.

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Ciara

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Country vibes

A few of our favourite things...

Dear editor



The article in *Irish Country Living* 18 January on hospital car park charges made for stark reading. It is nothing short of a scandal that those charges are allowed to continue.

We must remember that the people who use those car parks are not there on a pleasure trip. They are attending medical appointments, or visiting people who are ill or may be nearing the end of their lives. At a time when they are at their most vulnerable they have to ensure the charge is paid on their vehicle or face being clamped.

This is happening outside a building that is there to help and offer comfort to those in distress, which I know staff in hospitals do.

I hope your highlighting of this situation will help bring a change to this practice which I feel is exploiting people in their time of need.

Marian Dalton,
Co Carlow



Picture of the week
Tadhg and Peadar-Eoghan Lawlee enjoying a bit of fun in the famous Farmers Journal bucket in Lenamore, Ballylongford, Listowel, Co Kerry. \ Méabh Lawlee

Sweet sounds at Ortús Chamber Music Festival

Ten years ago, childhood friends Sinéad O'Halloran and Mairéad Hickey set up Ortús Chamber Music Festival with the vision of bringing the world's finest musicians together in Cork city. The festival marks its 10th anniversary from 27 February to 2 March with a packed programme featuring timeless classics by Mozart and Brahms alongside Irish composers, Sam Perkin and Ben Dwyer. Venues like Blackrock Castle, Dripsey Castle Estate and Sirius Arts Centre in Cobh offer a unique backdrop for the music. See ortusfestival.ie

Pictured below: Sinéad O'Halloran. \ Julie Daunt



Escape the winter blues

In need of a pick-me-up after storm Éowyn? Book a well-deserved getaway at The Johnstown Estate Hotel in Co Meath and relax at The Leisure Club, with steam, sauna and jacuzzi facilities, or indulge in afternoon tea with a view of the estate's expansive grounds as daffodils bloom. The Spring Treat package includes a night in a deluxe room, breakfast, a spring cocktail, and a two-course dinner for €250 per couple. Offer runs March to May. See thejohnstownestate.com

Get cosy

Meet Susan Banks – the 74-year-old woman brewing up big business in her Dublin kitchen by crocheting tea cosies. Her craft store Not Just Hats started out as a hobby and turned into something extraordinary. Every cosy she makes comes straight from Susan's imagination – no pattern required! Susan spends her days crocheting some of the most unique tea cosies you'll ever see from the famous Michael Tea Higgins, €45, to the cute gnomes with sheep (pictured above), €40. Susan says: "I've seen mass-produced cosies and they're so thin, there's no way they'd keep a teapot warm!" – A woman after our own heart. See *Instagram* @not_just_hats; notjusthats72@gmail.com



CRITICAL service

CRITICAL, Ireland's leading emergency medical response charity, is reporting a 45% increase in calls last year compared to 2023. There were 1,308 taskings in 2024, up from 900, and Donegal, Waterford, Cork and Tipperary had the highest number of calls. David Tighe (pictured), CRITICAL CEO says it is "providing an invaluable service by working with the National Ambulance Service to ensure that anyone experiencing chest pain, stroke or cardiac arrest will be seen to in as quick a time as possible." See criticalcharity.ie

Listen up

A new podcast series presented by radio broadcaster and GP, Dr Ciara Kelly, and family psychotherapist and author, Dr Richard Hogan, (pictured below), is worth a listen. Entitled *They F**k You Up* the pair discuss lots of topics ranging from affairs to anxiety, people-pleasing to dating and much more. The latest episode deals with technology and adolescence and is available wherever you get your podcasts.



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‘Err on the side of caution when going for a grant’

Aided by the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, Cork woman Ciara O’Brien turned a vacant 19th-century farmhouse into a vibrant B&B

By Rosalind Skillen

After nearly two decades working for giants like Unilever and Google in countries such as Singapore and the Netherlands, Ciara O’Brien wanted to move in a new direction.

The decision to leave the corporate world and renovate an old farmhouse in her hometown of Mitchelstown, Co Cork, was more than a career change – it was a life overhaul.

The idea took shape when she moved back in with her parents in 2020 during lockdown, and saw there was very little traditional B&B hospitality in the region.

It was a 19th-century farmhouse at the foothills of the Galtee Mountains that caught her eye and captured her heart. Bought in July 2021 – after two other attempts to buy in the area – Ciara saw potential in the location of the property, the traditional layout and the acre of land that came with it, developing it into the beautiful Barnahown B&B.

“I was spending so much time looking at a computer screen. I wanted to move more, get away from the desk, get outside,” explains Ciara.

“The property was vacant for about five years but in fairly good condition. I wanted to bring it back to its original state, so we hacked off all the old cement and stripped it back to the original structure of the stone walls.”

Ciara’s first challenge was finding an architect with a passion for renovating old properties.

“It was nearly impossible,” she says. “In the end, a local architect practice in Middleton took me on.”

In December 2021, the planning permission application went in and the first round of feedback came back the following March.

“The council wanted my justification for why the property was appropriate to be a B&B, and I had to make one adjustment to the studio apartment that I was adding to the farmhouse,” explains Ciara.



The entrance to the laundry room.



Ciara purchased her kitchen second-hand, and she recommends people shopping for preloved items to save money. \Claire Nash

In July 2022, Ciara’s planning was approved and she selected a builder contractor by the end of that year.

Ciara recommends engaging the building contractor as early as possible.

“Your builder can bring so much to the project, but they’re almost at the tail end.

The more I asked my builder, the more he told me.”

By the time that work started in April 2023, Ciara had left her job at Google to project manage the build.

“I used to be on site every morning for 10 to 15 minutes. I got so much value from seeing where my money was going. It meant nothing got delayed and there was no ‘we thought you’d like this.’”

Grant assistance

Ciara’s renovation journey was aided by the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (VPRG), a grant of up to €50,000 to renovate a property or up to €70,000 for a derelict building. Ciara describes it as a “nice bonus” but not without its challenges.

To apply for the VPRG, a property must be vacant for two years, built before 2008 and used as the owner’s primary place of residence (or a long-term rent). Ciara submitted utility bills along with a letter from the estate agent to confirm the house had been vacant, as well as ownership of the deeds and planning permission, including for the studio apartment where she lives.

Following a site inspection, Ciara received an offer letter in April 2023, awarding her full entitlement to the grant which enabled her to commence work on the property.

However, the VPRG payment is not issued until after a final property visit to review that the work has been completed in line with the application. For Ciara, this site inspection took place at the end of May 2024.

Six and a half months later, on 12 December 2024, Ciara received the grant payment. It had been over a year and a half since she broke ground on the property. She advises others to “go in with your eyes open”.

“For people trying to manage cash flow, it’s just impossible,” Ciara reflects. “Err on the side of caution and think about when you’ll get this grant back.”

The VPRGs are administered by local authorities, and Ciara corresponded with Cork County Council to track progress in the interim.

Ciara left the corporate world to set up a B&B in rural Mitchelstown.
 \ Claire Nash



She also took out a bridging loan which she paid interest on.

"It's hard because you've spent so much money and you're having to spend more servicing a loan," says Ciara.

In addition to the VPRG, Ciara used the SEAI One-Stop Shop, which brought the property from a G to an A BER rating.

"I wanted the house to be energy efficient," says Ciara. "We dug out the floor and put in floor insulation and underfloor heating." Ciara also put in wall installation, retrofitted the property, installed solar panels and a heat pump.

Ciara only received her money from SEAI in the middle of November 2024.

Between clawing back grants and managing personal finances, it is important to budget well for a house build. Ciara only went about five percent over her €375,000 budget, and cautions against being overly optimistic with the sums.

"Somebody gave me a figure of €2,000 per square metre. That's everything from insulation to finishes. I think it's a good rule of thumb."

"The second-hand furniture adds character to the house. It builds up a kind of a cosiness and warmth. Having well-worn and loved furniture gives that impression"

"My one tip is not to build a house that is too big. Design for how many square metres you can afford."

Once you have budgeted, start thinking about trade-offs, advises Ciara.

"I put the money into the bones of the house and re-pointing the stone walls but my kitchen is secondhand. I bought it for €500 and re-sprayed it. For me, that's the better trade off."

Another trade-off came when Ciara had to forgo her landscaping plan to replace the flat roof that was leaking into the two back bedrooms.

Things are often overlooked when planning a budget too, such as connecting to services.

"I had to sink my own well and get water connections. It cost maybe €2,000 to sink the well and €2,000 to connect to the mains for drinking water. Those are things that you may forget to budget for," Ciara explains.

She was also able to make her budget stretch by buying preloved furnishings.

"The second-hand furniture adds character to the house," Ciara says. "It builds up a kind of a cosiness and warmth. Having well-worn and loved furniture gives that impression."

While Mitchelstown is traditionally a stopover point between Dublin and Cork and Kerry, Ciara does not want people to feel like they are passing through.

"My ethos is about introducing people to the area, whether it be the mountains, food or drink."

Part of the charm of Barnahown is that it's used to showcase talent from the region. So much so, that her studio apartment is often rented out by influencers to film cooking videos. Ciara's flower arrangements come from Down to Earth Flowers in Co Limerick, her wall art features Galtee Mountain landscapes by local photographer Tommie McDonnell, and bespoke wooden keyrings for guest rooms are made by Pat Murphy, a woodworker based in Kildorrery, Co Cork.

At breakfast, almost everything comes from within 30 kilometres of Barnahown. Guests enjoy honey from Galtee Honey Farm, jam from The Little Deer in Co Tipperary and eggs from Barnahown's hens.

Ciara also allows other businesses and community groups to use the space for events, including crafts and yoga.

"It's back to the sustainable mindset," she says. "Use every bit of floor space before you build more. If you can give this space to somebody to run their own business or do something community minded, it's a good thing to do."

Next phase

Ciara is recycling the payment from the VPRG back into Barnahown for phase two.

"I'd like to employ one or two people full-time to do the laundry or breakfast, and then all my effort can go into the marketing and guest experience. I want to go from eight to 14 guest spaces, one of those will have disability access."

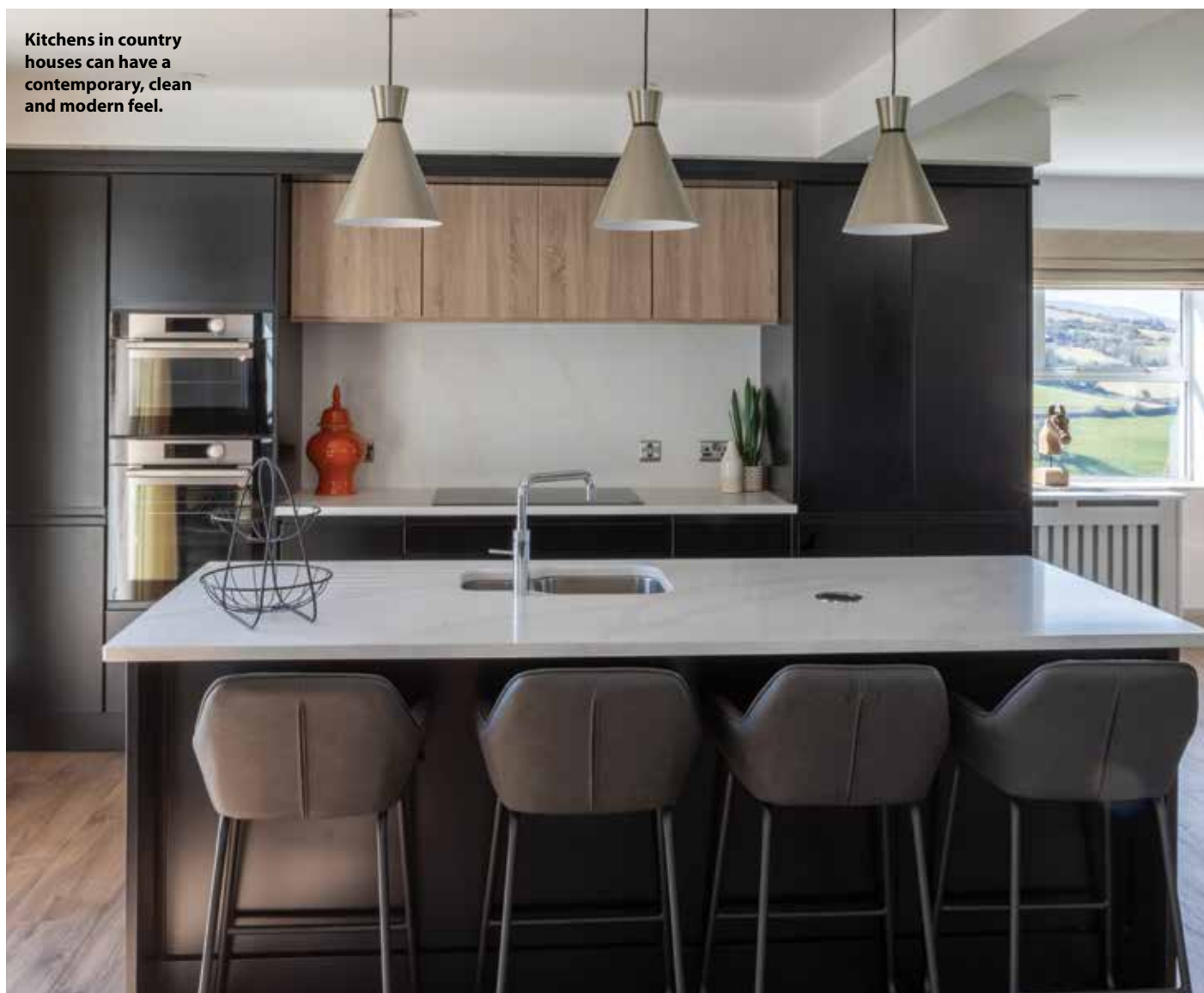
Ciara has fulfilled her wish of building a house in the country, a dream shared by many. And she has found special satisfaction in bringing a property back to life rather than building new.

"It is more sustainable and you're enhancing the community by ensuring something doesn't become derelict."

"People remember the people who live here before. Paddy and Chrissy O'Keefe, and it's like you're breathing life back into their memory," she adds.

See barnahown.com

Kitchens in country houses can have a contemporary, clean and modern feel.



A living room brought to life with a bright orange accent colour; below, a reception room that Alison designed with a deep green and gold accessories.



Style counsel: Making space for interior design

Professional stylist Alison Dunne, shares her tips for renovating old country homes and discusses the latest trends in rural Irish interiors

By Rosalind Skillen

Years ago, hiring an interior designer was considered a luxury. Today, it's as commonplace as calling in a painter or decorator. More and more people are turning to interior designers to bring their creative vision to life, especially when they're unsure of where to start.

Here in Ireland, one of those interior designers is Alison Dunne, based in Clough, Co Laois.

Living on a drystock farm with her husband Liam and their three sons, Alison knows first-hand the joys and challenges of renovating a rural home, having done up their own farmhouse 30 years ago.

She had always had a passion for interiors but it wasn't until after the birth of her second son, Cillian, that Alison decided to pursue it professionally.

"I always loved interior design, so I decided to go back to college when Cillian was a baby. I remember putting him to bed, studying and then getting up again at night to tend to my small baby. I trained at the Limperts Academy of Design where I went on to lecture," she says.

"It all paid off. My

business grew and grew over the years and having your own business is really suitable for family life and kids."

"I'm now doing this for nearly 20 years, and it's an amazing job. I get to design my clients' homes into a stylish and practical space that reflects their personality," says Alison.

"It's like an art. I get my mood boards and my sample boards together."

Alison's speciality is old country homes.

"I've renovated a lot of old country homes in the midlands – I love it. I've done homes that look like castles. I do contemporary homes as well, but I get a lot of period properties.

"Renovating old country homes is not for the fainthearted," she explains.

"There can be a lot of structural and prep work to be done before you even add a

paintbrush to the walls. It depends on the condition.

"With old country houses, a lot can have damp problems and the insulation probably needs to be upgraded. Windows and doors need to be repaired and replaced."

If you are lucky enough to be renovating an old country home, Alison recommends retaining as many of the original features as possible.

"Old fireplaces, cornices and wooden floorboards – owners should try and retain as many of these as possible, and you can add your own little contemporary twist. It's amazing what you can do once you get the structure right. It's like an artist and a canvas. You've got to get the canvas right before you can apply the paint on top."

Spending wisely

It is here – the foundations and structure of the house – where Alison says that the budget should mostly go.

"In terms of managing a budget for home renovation, future-proofing your property is essential.

"Prioritise upgrading insulation, repairing corners and mouldings, and installing proper flooring," says Alison, who also recommends installing a deep-stained engineered timber flooring in sitting and reception rooms to create a country vibe.

"The next big spend is the kitchen. You have to take that into consideration in your budget. I see a lot of young couples and they're doing a house for the first



Interior designer Alison Dunne.

time with a €100,000 budget and what they forget is that the kitchen could be €30,000 or €40,000."

"For many, the kitchen is the most important room in the house," says Alison. "Get the colour of your kitchen and your flooring right and all the other rooms will flow from there."

"If you're scrimping and scraping on flooring and your kitchen, it's an even bigger spend later to go back and redo it. Obviously, your bathrooms is another key area. If you can get your bathrooms, your kitchen, and all your flooring done properly, you're kind of already there."

Trends to follow

In recent years, Alison says there has been some exciting trends emerging in the world of interior design.

"I think wall panelling is definitely very welcome in our country homes. There are acoustic slat wall panels [specially designed panels made from sound-absorbing materials], tongue and groove [a method of fitting similar objects together, edge-to-edge, used mainly with wood], and wainscoting, which is probably the most popular style. Wainscoting is a decorative mould applied in a square or rectangle frame to make a design on your wall."

"If you can get your bathrooms, your kitchen, and all your flooring done properly, you're kind of there"

Wall panelling adds character and sophistication to your home, according to Alison.

"Colour drenching is also still on trend," she says. "This is where you paint everything the same shade – walls, the woodwork, ceilings, radiators, built-in furniture."

"When people colour drench, they mostly do deep colours – this can work really well in country homes where you've really high ceilings. A dark green or a navy adds style and sophistication and makes the room cosy and warm."

"These dark colours can be contrasted then with exuberant chandeliers and accessories like lamps."

Window seats are another feature that Alison loves.

"Nothing says country home like a warm plaid window seat. Country homes are blessed with high ceilings and deep walls, which are a great idea for window seats."

"One of the advantages is its ability to provide extra seating and storage without taking up floor space. You can dress up the windows seat down with plaid fabric and add cushions," she says.

Often for country homes – which sit in beautiful, natural settings – bridging the connection between the indoors and the outdoors is key.

"You don't want to bring the farm in," jokes Alison, "but ours is a farmhouse. The kitchen is to the front of the house and we put in massive windows. So now, our garden is literally in our kitchen. We built on an extension about 10 years ago, and



The reception room (above and below). "The room was very big and spacious. Putting that big old Victorian table in the centre gave it that grand feeling and the big chandelier is really modern," says Alison.



the difference it makes is unbelievable. We can see the lads out playing hurling, it's lovely.

"What are really popular now are pergolas [an outdoor garden feature that serves as a sitting area]," says Alison. "It connects the house with the outside. At home, when I open my patio doors, I walk straight out to the pergola. I have garden furniture, so I can sit out in the rain."

When it comes to home renovation, it is clear that every detail matters. Although many people have a strong eye for colour and fabric, Alison explains that a professional interior designer can help to draw out the smaller details which enhance the overall style and function of the property.

"If you had dry rot or if you had a damp room in your house, you get a professional in. Do it, as it really makes such a difference. You can always tell when an interior designer has worked in a house. It's our job."

Most interior designers do two-hour consultations where they come out to the home and talk to clients about what colours, lighting and fabrics suit their home. Alison explains that these in-home design consultations are a good place to start on a project.

"Most designers offer this service, and the insight you gain into your space is absolutely invaluable. It's unbelievable what you can learn in just that time."

See alisondunneinteriordesign.ie

'I'm not so sure our ancestors would be too impressed with this new tradwife trend'



Five years on from downloading the popular social media app and I can't even remember the days BTT (Before TikTok).

I can't believe there was a time when I didn't know what a "mukbang" was (a food eating video of South Korean origin, made famous by the platform). I have also learned what my kids mean when they say things like "rizz", "skib-bity" and "sigma".

My husband is there, too, but instead of food-eating videos and parenting tips, he's fully on the "FarmTok" algorithm – videos about machinery and grazing systems.

It has brought a lot of knowledge to our lives. Some we are thankful for and some, well... you're left wondering: "Did I really need to know that?" One thing stands out to me, and has once again been brought to my attention in recent weeks: the "tradwife" trend.

One of the most famous "tradwives" on TikTok recently moved herself and her family to Ireland to attend a cookery course at Ballymaloe Cookery School.

This woman's account is called Ballerina Farm – this is because, before she became a so-called tradwife, she was a trained ballerina. She gave it all up for love and moved to a farm in the state of Utah in the USA. Now, she has millions of views on videos where she's making cheese from scratch, or homemade marshmallows. She is probably the most popular of these online influencers who represent the "tradwife" trend. But what actually is a tradwife?

I'm not going to lie – it makes me roll my eyes a bit, and I think farmwives everywhere, no matter what age, location or generation we belong to, might look at this trend and think to ourselves: "Honestly?"

The actual definition of a tradwife is a woman who believes in and practises traditional gender roles within a marriage. This often means giving up a career and taking on the role of a traditional "homemaker". They aren't all associated with farms, but most enjoy making elaborate things from scratch (from roast dinners to homemade

breakfast cereals) and tend to home-school their kids. This is different from homesteading – tradwives are all about traditional, subservient marriage roles.

American tradwives tend to be quite religious – often practising Mormons or born-again Christians – and, whether they mean to or not, they tend to attract a politically right-wing following.

Despite being an ardent feminist, you could say my role in my marriage is pretty traditional. I do the cooking and most of the housekeeping. I have the children's schedules in my head at all times and spend way too much time carting them around. I do everything I do because I love my family. I like cooking. I like living in a clean house. I want my kids to do all of the things.

I don't do these things because I believe I should be doing them, though. And I'm raising daughters. I am very aware of what the role in my marriage might look like to them. They know they will never be pressured to get married or have kids of their own.

"Women have fought long and hard for equal rights within society – we are still fighting. Let's not get sidetracked"

To me, the tradwife trend is dangerous. In addition to taking the women's rights movement back 50 years, these women are also setting some ridiculous standards. Let's not forget, it is a privilege to be able to afford to be a housewife and make Corn Flakes from scratch. These women might think they have made a conscious decision to live this way, but I too grew up in a very religious household. As a girl, you are raised to wait on the men in your life.

The decisions we make in our lives are often influenced by our lived experiences and are never really 100% independent. If you were raised to believe you need to have babies and a husband to have self-worth within society, that is going to influence your future decisions.

It doesn't matter how much education you get in the meantime – I was socialised to behave this way and despite understanding my independence, I am still, in many ways, subservient to the men in my life. This ends with my daughters' generation. Women have fought long and hard for equal rights within society – we are still fighting. Let's not get sidetracked by a social media trend.

Track your health stats with a click of a button

A plethora of smartphone apps are giving us more insights and useful tools to help live healthier and more mindful lives

Rosalind Skillen Health



In a saturated online world of differing (and sometimes opposing) advice, staying on top of our health can feel like a full-time job. Thankfully, smartphone apps are enabling us to understand our bodies in ways that were once unimaginable.

Gone are the days of guessing how many hours you slept or how many steps you've taken.

Whether it's tracking your heart rate or increasing the nutrients in your diet, here are some of the smartphone apps providing you with detailed insights and personal advice to improve your overall health outcomes.

Most apps are free to download, but you only have access to the most basic features. Many apps have a paid version, and offer in-app purchases granting you access to more features. To use an example, Headspace is €57.99 per year and Strava costs between €7.99 to €10.99 per month.

Flo Period and Pregnancy Tracker

Your mum has told you to track your periods since forever, yet here you are again looking at the calendar trying to remember when was the last one. Was it two weeks ago or three? Flo, the world's leading period and pregnancy tracker, takes the mental gymnastics out of period tracking.

The main feature of the app is the tracker where you can log your period and symptoms, and this is included in

the free version. The paid version offers a much more rounded experience, not only helping you to stay on top of your menstrual cycle, but also offering access to resources, articles and expert-led advice.

Try Dry

Putting a curb on your alcohol intake can quickly become overwhelming without a clear way to track your efforts and stay accountable. The official app of the Dry January challenge, Try Dry, can help you to take control of your drinking in a consistent manner. Unlike many sobriety apps, the beauty of Try Dry is that it works brilliantly if you don't want to give up drink, but simply want to be more aware of your alcohol intake.

The app is very simple to use, you log your alcoholic drinking on a colour-coded calendar (yellow for staying dry, grey for planned drinking and black for unplanned drinking). As the calendar accrues with colour, you get a visual insight into your drinking patterns over a period of time. Keeping track can be as simple as clicking 'I had a drink' or you can provide further detail on what kind of drink, how many units and the price.

Headspace: Meditation and Sleep

Do you feel like your brain is always on and it's impossible to switch off? You sit down and try to unwind but before you know it, your mind is racing with thoughts like what's for dinner? Who is doing the school run? Headspace is an app that allows you to make time for yourself even in the busiest of days.

The app has hundreds of meditations for everything from anxiety, stress, sleep, productivity, or gratitude, all aimed to



Running trackers are a useful fitness tool. iStock

help you focus on the present.

In the paid version of the app, there are breathing exercises, daily reminders, structured meditation plans, one-to-ones with experts and sleepcasts to help you doze off. There are also workout videos for mindful movement, including cardio, dance and yoga.

Runna

You may have started the year with the best intentions to take up running, but having no concrete plan is stopping you from getting out the door. Runna is

an app designed to keep you on track (both literally and figuratively) and the app thinks of itself as a personal running coach and accountability partner.

Runna builds you a highly tailored and individual running programme, with a variety of runs from interval sprints to hill training and strength training videos to stop exercise from becoming boring.

The app also offers tips from profes-

"When we think about our health, we should not overlook cultivating qualities like motivation, discipline and focus..."



Slow down from the busyness of life with a meditation app; above, track your sleep. \iStock

including a snore recorder, sleep recorder and sleep sounds like soundscapes and bedtime stories. One drawback is that the device has to be kept by the bedside to track all of the above, which goes against the advice to keep all electronic devices out of the bedroom.

Forest: Focus for Productivity

When we think about our health, we should not overlook cultivating qualities like motivation, discipline and focus that are part of that broader picture of wellness. Mental clarity and concentration is a big part of being healthy and also a part of combatting 'brain rot' – that state of mental fatigue that occurs after you've scrolled mindlessly on your phone and your brain cells have numbed, dropped off and died.

With Forest, you plant a virtual tree for the amount of time that you want to stay focused and your tree grows in the allotted time. If you leave early, the app warns that you will have dead trees in your forest – something nobody wants!

Strava

If you are someone who needs to share their physical activity with others to keep yourself motivated and accountable, then Strava is the fitness app for you. Strava markets itself as an app that makes fitness tracking social. You can record everything from runs to swims to cycle rides and share it with friends who can give you 'kudos' and celebrate your achievements with you.

The paid version of the app gives you premium features, like discovering and creating new routes, and more data analytics about your movement to help you improve over time.

Yuka

The food shop on a Saturday is no longer a case of popping items into your trolley and moving on. Now, it has become a mammoth of a task, with incomprehensible ingredient lists that you can't pronounce, let alone recognise. The kids are getting restless in the aisle as you weigh up whether 'low fat' trumps 'reduced fat' or if 'no added sugar' means sugar-free.

The food and cosmetic scanner, Yuka, removes the guess work out of food shopping, enabling you to quickly scan products to evaluate their impact on your health. Yuka uses a simple colour code to inform you of the product's impact: excellent, good, mediocre, or poor. You can access an information page for each product to give you more detail on what is behind its shiny label.

sionals for stretching and nutrition on rest days so you don't overdo it.

If you want to get active this year, Runna can build you a comprehensive running programme that you can start and stick to.

Sleep Cycle: Sleep Tracker

One of the best things we can do for our health is get a handle on our sleep. Like Macbeth – who does murder sleep – it feels like restless nights where we wake up groggy the following morning rob us of our mental peace and clarity. Sleep Cycle is a personal sleep tracker app with a smart alarm clock to help you get a good night's rest and wake you up at the optimal moment in your sleep cycle.

The premium service has a lot of features to analyse and improve your sleep,

'HOW TO INTEGRATE APPS IN YOUR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE'

Dr John Francis Leader, also known as JFL, is a cognitive scientist and chartered psychologist with the Psychological Society of Ireland focusing on the intersection of psychology and technology.

"What is really important is being able to integrate apps in your day-to-day life," says Dr Leader. "The first thing is clarifying what are you trying to achieve but the other thing is this kind of stylistic or narrative bit. Even if technically the app does what you want, you just might not resonate with it. Sometimes it's the voice of the person that guides you in a meditation or just the user interface. You could have the best methodology in the world but if you don't gel with it, you won't use it."



Dr John Francis Leader. \Virgin Media

Knowing if you like an app can only come from testing it out, he recommends trying an app for three months and then reviewing how often you use it to see if you should keep it, cancel or try another one.

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13th - 20th June, 2025

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Baiona to Santiago de Compostela

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021 422 66 55 or edel@breakcancer.ie

WORDS OF LIFE

**For by grace are ye saved through faith,
and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God**

Ephesians ch. 2 v. 8

Planning restrictions surrounding one-off housing in Ireland are making it harder for farm families to build rural homes. viStock



Support for rural housing rings hollow as planning continues to thwart families

WEEK ONE

By Jacqueline Hogge

A new eight-week series on building a house in rural Ireland begins with *Irish Country Living* looking at all the factors that farming families need to consider when planning a home of their own

A commitment by the newly installed coalition Government to 'continue to support one-off rural housing', which is included in the Programme for Government, will be of little reassurance to the people who are being denied permission to build homes on their own land.

Frustration with a planning system that has been deemed inconsistent and unfair by those who have navigated its many levels, at a cost of thousands of euros, has been experienced the length and

breadth of the country, with little uniformity in policies across local authorities.

As the country continues to languish in a housing crisis and Government figures show its own targets of new home delivery fell short in 2024. All efforts seem focused on providing housing developments in urban areas with little progress made on making it easier for people in rural Ireland to build their own homes.

Rural Housing Planning guidelines, which date back to 2005, are in the process of being updated, but there is, as yet, no date for the publication of new rules.

The Government has admitted that there must be a recognition of the distinct needs and opportunities of rural Ireland and that this must be at the heart of deci-

sion making when it comes to planning. Yet, anyone who has been refused planning will tell you that their needs are not being recognised when it comes to affording them the opportunity to build their own home.

Residency requirement

Local authorities base their planning policies on their individual County Development Plans, which are unique to that county or administrative area. While these plans are guided by the National Planning Framework, published in 2018, their interpretation and implementation is at the discretion of the council executive, namely the planning department.

For example, in Co Meath a person

seeking planning for a one-off rural home must be a resident in the area for a minimum of five years and reside within 12km of the site proposed for development. In Galway, the residency requirement is a minimum of seven years and the applicant must have lived within 8km of the proposed site, for a substantial, continuous part of their life.

The need to prove you are intrinsic to the community seems to be a uniform requirement, regardless of the fine print, but even where it can be shown that a person has grown up in an area and has family land to build on, applications are being refused.

Housing Minister

Irish Country Living has spoken to people all over the country to hear their experiences of the planning system. Our requests for interview to several local authorities have been declined.

This is despite the fact that An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, acknowledged the crisis facing farming families, who are being prevented from building homes on their land, in the run up to last November's general election, saying sons and daughters of farmers should be able to do so.

Over the coming weeks we will look at the issues facing landowners trying to build homes in rural Ireland. We will continue to lobby local authorities for comment on how planning decisions are determined and we hope to speak with the newly appointed Housing Minister James Browne to get answers on why those who have land and can prove a housing need are not being allowed to build.

“Planning applications are being delayed or refused countrywide, on land which already accommodates farmhouses but is now deemed unsuitable for the children of these families to build their own homes”

The issue of rural housing has been raised at national political level many times in recent years, with several TDs calling on the last administration's Housing Minister Darragh O'Brien to clarify when updated rural housing guidelines will be published.

In all responses, Minister O'Brien cited the National Planning Framework's (NPF) policy objectives as being clear on the matter. In particular, he referenced the National Policy Objective. This states that in areas under urban influence within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, single housing in the countryside should be facilitated. This is based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area, along with meeting the siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans.

In rural areas elsewhere, the NPF states



The newly appointed Minister for Housing, James Browne.

single housing in the countryside should be facilitated based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlement.

Nonetheless, planning applications are being delayed or refused countrywide, on land which already accommodates farmhouses but is now deemed unsuitable for the children of these families to build their own homes.

One of the biggest hurdles for many to clear, is the impact new rural houses have on road safety, with sight lines a consistent impediment for anyone looking to build adjacent to a national or regional road.

However, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), the body responsible for maintaining the national and regional road network, appeals less than 1% of the planning applications it is consulted on.

Guidelines review

The Programme for Government has committed to a review of the planning and transport guidelines for national secondary roads to facilitate housing, community and industrial development, but no timeline has been agreed for delivery.

Other reasons planning applications are refused include design issues, where the proposed building is not in keeping with the local landscape or environmental considerations, as much of rural Ireland is designated a special area of conservation.

The frustration of those living in these areas is compounded by the fact that people who are not local to the community are being granted planning to demolish derelict houses and build new structures – which are not in keeping with the original dwelling – without any difficulty.

The current impasse for farming families seeking to build their own home flies in the face of a recommendation issued over 25 years ago in a government White Paper on Rural Development that stated the future of rural society was based on the maintenance of dispersed, vibrant rural communities.

This paper recommended that planning policy should as far as possible ‘facilitate people willing to settle in rural areas, particularly those willing to settle in their own areas of origin’.

Many prospective homeowners in rural Ireland would like to see this basic principle prioritised in any new regulations due from government.

Lack of knowledge a stumbling block to securing planning

Local authorities suggest poor advice and a lack of knowledge are among the reasons people in rural areas are being refused planning permission for a home

By Jacqueline Hogge

In a bid to uncover the extent to which planning permission for a home in rural Ireland is secured, *Irish Country Living* has sought interviews with several local authorities across the country for information on how they determine such matters.

Very few senior management members of local authorities were willing to speak on the matter, despite the deepening housing crisis affecting rural families, particularly those who are being denied permission to build on their own land.

Liam Hanrahan is the director of services for planning and economic development in Galway County Council. He defended the local authority's record in granting planning applications for rural housing and said the confusion and frustration among the public was down to a lack of knowledge and poor advice being offered to those seeking to build a home.

“People usually come in with an idea of what they want but that is all they have, so we refer them to the County Development Plan which has all the nuances of what will and won't be granted planning,” he says.

“Development Management Standards are updated with every County Development Plan and these vary county by county. But planning policy is driven by the County Development Plan.

“A lot of people want to build houses on land beside their parents, who would have had no issue getting planning 30 years ago. But the issue is that back then, local authorities had responsibility for the roads, now its Transport Infrastructure Ireland and it's a different situation.

“Advice from your local authority or a good planning agent is very important and I would say that an applicant has to be confident that their agent has the required skills to deal with every aspect of the process. There is no point submitting a drawing from an architect if it doesn't come with the necessary information from roads, engineering, landscaping and water and



Liam Hanrahan, Galway County Council.

that it doesn't answer the pertinent questions that will be asked.”

Mr Hanrahan said that despite the current Rural Housing Guidelines dating back to 2005, they still apply in principle when designing a rural home.

Visually overwhelming

“In one sense, the guidelines are dated but design principles have largely remained the same and can be modified,” he reasons.

“In the Celtic Tiger era, people ran amok with extravagant plans, oversized windows and the box effect where people added extensions to traditional farmhouses mixing it up too much with what ended up being visually overwhelming buildings.

“It all comes down to good design, where you have simple, clear lines that is sensitive to local landscape and takes sustainability and climate into account. The best advice to people is to be practical in their plans, no one wants to see a planning application come before them for a 5,000 sq ft house.

“In one sense when you look at the County Development Plan, the development standards and the samples in the guidelines shouldn't be too much of a hindrance when seeking to build a traditional Irish rural house,” he explains.

“There are a lot of examples that can be used as reference and in terms of the guidelines, the form won't change a whole pile.

“Recent planning applications

'Farmers' sons and daughters are definitely finding it difficult to get planning for homes on their lands'

FROM PAGE 13

is where people should start when looking to apply for planning permission as they're the best guidance of what will and won't be granted."

However, many people who have gone through the planning process will know that it's not always the most straightforward journey. Delays at this stage can lead to huge costs, either through reports sought as further information or the rising cost of construction, both of which add a hefty price tag to the overall build.

Mr Hanrahan said Galway County Council has a strong record when it comes to determining planning applications.

"By law, planning applications have to be dealt with in four weeks unless further information is requested and usually the majority of cases are determined in this timeframe," he says.

"Further information usually relates to water connections, survey works, septic tank loads and related issues. Sight lines, how close the site is to a national road and if it is close to a junction or intersection, will involve a submission from TII on the application and we have to take that into account.

"However, we have granted planning permission against TII advice, which in some cases has been appealed to an Bord Pleanála, but local knowledge will play a factor in the balance of probability.

"We have an approval rate of 81% for all planning applications in Galway county but preparation is huge on all applications in this day and age. People need to know what they need to submit for planning and while some paperwork can take time to generate, an application for a water connection to Irish Water doesn't need an architects' drawing.

"My advice to people would be to spend between six and 12 months thinking about the building they want to build and know what paperwork is required and have it to hand when making an application."

Hands are tied

Cllr Michael Hegarty is the chair of Cork County Council's Planning Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).

The role of the SPC is to assist the local authority in the formulation, development and review of policy. This allows councillors to be fully involved in the policy making process by preparing the groundwork from an early stage before matters are put before the full council membership.

The Fine Gael councillor has repre-



The role of the SPC is to assist the local authority in the formulation, development and review of policy. \iStock



Cllr Michael Hegarty, Cork County Council.

sented the people of east Cork for 40 years and says it is definitely getting harder to secure planning permission for a rural home.

"We have a target of 600 rural homes to be built in Co Cork per annum and the figure for 2024 was approximately 570 so we are close to meeting our targets," he says.

"Farmers' sons and daughters are definitely finding it difficult to get plan-

ning for homes on their land but you are eligible for planning if you've met the criteria of living in an area for seven years or more or if it is your first home. Returning emigrants are also eligible as are those who can prove a housing need due to exceptional health circumstances. Those who have set up businesses in rural areas also have to be accommodated when it comes to planning permission."

Cllr Hegarty says that for all the positive influence councillors try to have on planning, their hands are tied by directives from central government.

"We are obliged to take into consideration the National Planning Framework which has so many pillars that must be adhered to so it is becoming more of a challenge to accommodate the planning applications we receive. And there has been an increase across the board," he says.

"Our County Development Plan has substantial areas of zoned land but trying to get these lands serviced, with connections to Irish Water is a big problem for us. Certain arms of the State are not working together when it comes to planning and I worry about smaller villages and towns, waiting on services which are going to

be a long time coming given the lack of joined up thinking."

Other factors including environmental concerns are also an issue for those seeking to build a rural home and Cllr Hegarty believes the public have to acknowledge this when making a planning application.

"Lot of areas in rural parts of the county have no public services and certain lands aren't suitable for the development of housing where proprietary wastewater treatment units, over septic tanks, are required," he says.

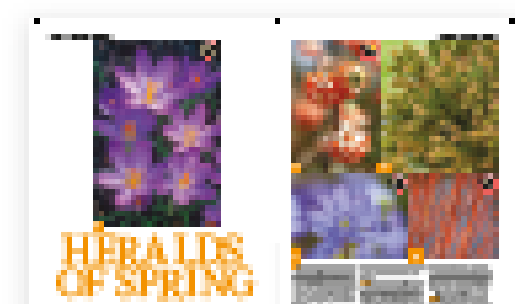
COMING UP IN OUR SERIES

- ➔ Pre-planning meetings – how important are they?
- ➔ Mortgage advice – the steps involved in applying and drawing down funds when building a home in rural Ireland.
- ➔ Grant support – advice on the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant to the financial supports offered by SEAI for retrofitting and improving the comfort of homes.

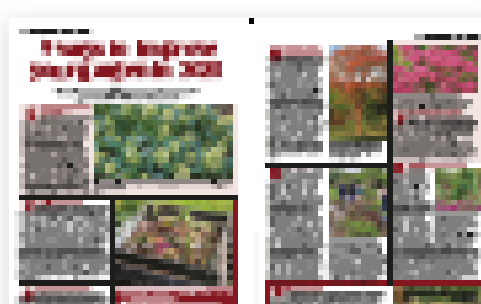


TRY SOMETHING NEW

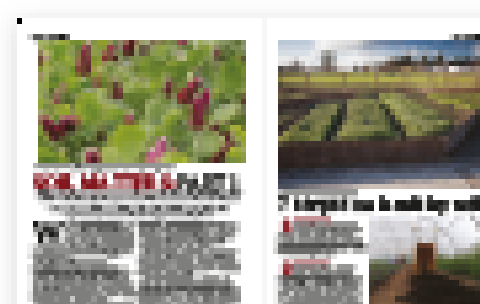
As winter merges into spring, it's an ideal time to try something new in the garden, overhaul your growing space or fine-tune the way that you do things.



HERALDS OF SPRING
Vibrant bulbs and resilient flowers and
tools emerging on bare stems promise that
spring will soon be here



**9 WAYS TO IMPROVE
YOUR GARDEN IN 2020**
Be inspired to realise the full potential of
your garden in the year ahead



SOIL MATTERS
How to achieve a healthy and
productive soil

Garden

Couple are the toast of the town with thriving café

Last year was a very challenging one for Irish food companies. So far, 2025 has not seen them fare any better – but there are good news stories too, like Clare business, Beag Café



Andrew Flood and Aoife Power in Beag, Kilrush, Co Clare.

\ Eamon Ward

By Janine Kennedy

It is several days after storm Éowyn, and the road to Kilrush, Co Clare is still littered with debris from fallen trees. ESB workers can be seen working away on the roadsides; a stark reminder of how many rural Irish dwellers (at the time of writing) are still living without electricity. In times like these, all of us lean on these skilled workers, as we also lean on small local businesses.

Aoife Power and Andrew Flood are experiencing both sides of the spectrum – on the day of our visit, they are without power in their Doonbeg home, but their small business, Beag Café, in Kilrush,

(beagfood.com) lost power for just one day. They have been able to operate as normal, with a few minor adjustments.

“On the day we lost power, we knew we would lose some stock, so we set up a table on the street and gave away our perishables,” Aoife says. “We hate food waste and would much rather see it eaten than thrown in the bin.”

With said ingredients given away, the pair reopened the next day with a slightly adjusted menu. They made what Andrew called “storm Éowyn specials” for the weekend.

“We were really busy,” he says. “We made a lot of veggie-based stuff, like a Turkish-style chickpea stew with sumac. Our hard cheeses were ok, and our Gubbeen chorizo, so there were a lot of

toasties, and we were still able to do all of our baking.”

Aside from handing out food in the street, the community has benefitted from having a café like Beag in its midst. During the mass loss of electricity, locals knew they could come in for hot food, a good cup of coffee and a place to charge their mobile phones.

Beating heart

Cafés and other small food businesses have become the beating heart of rural Irish communities. In the past, it was the pub, but in recent years cafés seem to have surpassed the pub in popularity. Beag Café is living proof of this – in fact, their location, a historic building in the town centre, was once a pub.

“Looking inside the presses, you’ll see dates of births and deaths pencilled in [from years past],” Andrew shows us, smiling. “We didn’t think we would be able to move into a permanent location so quickly after starting our business – this is just how things have gone for us.”

But Beag Café seems to be an outlier when it comes to the current Irish hospitality crisis. After just a year operating in a food truck on the Kilrush marina, Aoife and Andrew’s success led them to their newer brick-and-mortar location in the town centre, which they opened in March, 2024.

“We initially thought we’d be in the food truck for at least five years,” Aoife explains. “And we thought the business might not work in Kilrush and we would

have to move elsewhere in the county, like Kilkee. But rent is affordable here and even when we were in the food truck, we only ever ended up moving it a few times for events – we were busy enough on the marina.”

Organic growth

The pair moved to the area (Aoife is originally from Limerick and Andrew, from east Clare) post-pandemic for a healthier pace of life. As musicians, they had spent the previous decade living and working in England where their indie band, *whenyoung*, had been signed to a major record label. They also spent time working in hospitality and landscape architecture.

“I think the food industry has been better to us,” Aoife says. “There is definitely more of a community in food. We got a record deal in 2017 and then when the pandemic happened, the music industry became a lot more difficult.”

“We were both into food and hospitality, so we decided to give the food truck a go,” Andrew adds. “We started off selling toasties, coffee and buns – we were making everything at home in our kitchen.”

“We’ve been lucky as well; we have two really reliable employees who just ‘get it’. We all share out the duties – dishes, front of house, whatever needs doing”

“The best thing about moving into the permanent location [aside from having a larger kitchen] is that we now have a space for people to gather,” he continues. “It’s created more of an identity for us; we’ve been able to curate our style and we recently got a wine licence. Our growth has been organic, most of our marketing has been through social media.”

“We’ve been lucky as well; we have two really reliable employees who just get it,” Aoife says. “We all share out the duties – dishes, front of house, whatever needs doing.”

Things aren’t perfect, of course, and despite an overall positive experience with Beag Café, Aoife and Andrew face similar challenges to other small food businesses. As they move forward, they are committed to taking things slowly, avoiding food waste and being frugal with finances.

“For a long time we weren’t really paying ourselves; we were just putting everything we could back into the business,” Aoife says. “But now we’re in a place where we are making an income. To be honest, I think the music industry was a great learner for us as we’ve gone from one precarious industry to another.”

“We do as much as we can ourselves,” Andrew adds. “In terms of the set-up, we did most of the work – we financed everything ourselves. We haven’t been eligible for any grants [small business grants] – that’s because the enterprise is new.”

Aoife and Andrew haven’t yet reached all of their business goals, but say they plan to make small changes as they can afford them. They are committed to the



Andrew Flood and Aoife Power outside their small business, Beag Café. \ Eamon Ward



Keith Darcy is a hospitality consultant who specialises in finance.

community they have built around themselves – both in the town and with other food producers in the region.

They prioritise using local ingredients in menu items and value their customer base, many of whom have been with them since they were selling toasties from their food truck.

“They and the local producers are the real stars of the business,” Aoife says. “All of the products we use are so good; there is so much going on in this region that isn’t shouted about enough. Our local veg supplier [Sevenacres Farm] is just up the road, our eggs are from Wild Irish Farm

Doonbeg, we use Hazel Mountain Chocolate and our bread is from Sourdó Farrell in Ennis. We’re just combining all of these great flavours to make something delicious.”

What can be done?

It’s uplifting to hear stories of success like Aoife and Andrew’s. Unfortunately, of late, we are mostly hearing news of rural food businesses closing down instead of opening up or expanding.

According to Deloitte, Irish corporate insolvency figures for 2024 reached a record 875 – the highest number since 2016. Of these, the vast majority of insolvencies comprised of SMEs (small to medium enterprises), including many hospitality businesses (figures for hospitality were up 60% from 2023).

Last October, *Irish Country Living* reported on the extreme disappointment which came along with Budget 2025, where it was announced that the VAT rate for hospitality businesses would remain at 13.5% and not lowered to 9%, as was the hope.

This past January, the newly elected Government made a commitment to lower the VAT rate to 9% for food-based hospitality businesses, hairdressing and entertainment, though it is still unclear when this will be implemented.

Lowering the VAT rate is not going to solve the problems of the Irish hospitality industry, but it will reduce financial pres-

ures. Right now, Government-mandated minimum wage increases are putting additional pressure on businesses already dealing with increases in rent, ingredients and overheads.

Keith Darcy is a Kerry-based professional business coach and consultant who specialises in finance (keithdarcy.ie). As a fully certified Qualified Financial Advisor (QFA) and qualified management accountant, he is no stranger to the financial issues commonly seen in business. He says hospitality businesses are really experiencing these at the moment.

“In my experience there have been several challenges faced by small food businesses in Ireland over the past 12 months,” he says. “These include escalating costs, food safety compliance issues, supply chain disruptions [affecting availability and cost of raw materials], staff shortages, not being able to keep up with technological advancements in the industry and consumer demand fluctuations.”

While things are difficult, Keith believes taking a proactive and positive approach to the day-to-day operations are important.

“Perseverance and resilience are key,” he says. “Challenges are part of the journey, and with the right strategies, you can overcome them and thrive.”

Keith’s practical steps

Keith offers the following advice to help small businesses:

1. Review finances to see where you can cut cost without impacting on quality.
2. Diversify your offering with meal kits, new takeaway options or a new line of free-from foods.
3. Leverage technology by converting to a POS (point of sale) system, online ordering platforms or inventory management software.
4. Build strong customer relationships through loyalty programmes, discounts or personalised experiences.
5. Focus on quality and consistency (the keys to any successful food business).
6. Be flexible and adapt your business model as needed.
7. Provide employees with the support and training necessary to excel in their work.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT?

- ➔ Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) offer programmes like LEAN Consulting and Green for Business which helps small businesses become more financially and economically sustainable (localenterprise.ie).
- ➔ Obtaining an SEAI energy efficiency grant can help reduce long-term energy costs through retrogrades and updated equipment (seai.ie).
- ➔ There are a number of private hospitality business mentors who can take a deeper look at your business to find any inefficiencies in finance, food or marketing.
- ➔ Microfinance Ireland (MFI) is a not-for-profit lender which can supply small Irish businesses with loans to help them grow. It can provide loans of up to €50,000 (microfinanceireland.ie).



Lifestyle & Culture

Beef up your love-ly meal

Indulge in a perfectly-cooked steak dinner for Valentine's Day and finish with chocolate dessert

Neven Maguire
Recipes



Valentine's Day comes but once a year. Amelda and I have now been married for 18 years, and I am sure that you if asked, she would tell you that every day is like Valentine's Day in our house.

Instead of that one romantic evening on 14 February, we actually see a lot of couples coming to MacNean to stay for the entire weekend. We also see a lot of tables booked for four people, with two couples taking a short weekend holiday together. However it's done, it's nice to be able to celebrate and enjoy a good meal with your loved one or some friends.

As I am writing this, we are still recovering somewhat from storm Éowyn. We closed the restaurant the Thursday before the storm hit – with a red alert, we just didn't want to see any of our staff having to travel the roads. When things like this happen, we phone each of our customers who have bookings. Everyone always understands, thankfully. On the Friday, we phoned around again and people were once again happy to travel.

Over the weekend, we had guests from Wexford, Dublin, Galway and Belfast. Though our power had gone out from the storm, we have a very good generator which can keep the restaurant running and provide electricity to 20 bedrooms. On Saturday night, during dinner service, the lights came back on and there was a big cheer from everyone. I have to say well done to ESB and thank you to the crews who were out working in some really rough conditions.

It was on with the show. I couldn't imagine a MacNean House menu without some kind of beef offering – our guests love it and it always flies out of the

kitchen. We get our beef from John Stone in Ballymahon; it has great flavour and is such a consistent product. If you're buying beef in the supermarket, Dunnes Stores Simply Better Irish Angus beef comes from Jennings in Ballinrobe – also a very flavourful, consistent product line.

Ireland is now the only country in the world with PGI status grass-fed beef and the status is well-deserved. Congratulations to our fantastic farmers all over the island of Ireland, who take such care in producing our beef.

Today's recipe is a classic steak with peppercorn sauce – an ideal Valentine's Day dinner if you're planning to stay in. For this recipe, I am using delicious Irish striploin steak, but you can also use ribeye or fillet steak, if you prefer.

I am always asked how to cook the perfect steak. Like anything, it takes a bit of practice, but it's not as difficult as it might seem. Firstly, I always buy steak from my local butcher – they can slice it to your desired thickness and give you recommendations depending on how you want to cook it.

I love to see a steak properly cooked and served nicely pink, juicy and tender. It's a beautiful thing.

Of course, steak is a treat, which is why it's so nice to serve on Valentine's Day. The rustic potatoes included with this recipe cook quickly and are really tasty.

Irish Challenger is a potato that I first came across last year. They are dry, floury and perfect for this recipe as they crisp up nicely when roasted.

Of course, no Valentine's Day meal is complete without a chocolatey dessert and this chocolate mousse recipe is a real crowd pleaser. I learned how to make it when I was working in the Michelin starred restaurant, Roscoff, with chef Paul Rankin in Belfast. Years later, I am still making it. We teach this recipe in our cookery school and it always goes down a treat with our guests.

Coole Swan cream liqueur, which is made just down the road in Co Cavan, is the perfect addition to the smooth chocolate. The mousse is light but still feels indulgent. It's also lovely served with some sliced banana.



Steak with rustic potato slices

INGREDIENTS: Serves 4-6
4-6 150-175g striploin steaks, well-trimmed and at room temperature
Rapeseed oil, for brushing
1 tbsp butter
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the rustic potato slices:
675g potatoes, scraped or scrubbed clean
1 fresh rosemary sprig, broken into tiny sprigs
3 garlic cloves, lightly crushed (skin still on)
3 tbsp rapeseed oil

For the peppercorn sauce:
1 tbsp butter

2 shallots, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
450ml beef stock (from a cube is fine)
2 tsp crushed black peppercorns
4 tbsp cream
2 tbsp Cognac

To serve:
Sautéed Savoy cabbage

METHOD
1 Preheat the oven to 200°C. Line a baking tray with parchment paper and then set it aside.
2 Cut the potatoes into slices approxi-

DAYS OUT

'This is my All-Ireland final being a proud Tipperary artist'



SPORT

Surviving and thriving are challenges for provincial rugby clubs



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mately 5mm thick and arrange in a single layer on the lined baking tray.
3 Add the rosemary and garlic. Season generously with salt, drizzle over the oil and toss until evenly coated.
4 Roast in the preheated oven for 15–20 minutes, until cooked through and lightly golden, turning once or twice.
5 Meanwhile, make the peppercorn sauce: melt the butter in a pan over a medium heat. Add the shallots and garlic and cook for 3–4 minutes, until softened but not coloured.
6 Stir in the stock and cook for 10–15 minutes, until reduced by half.
7 Strain the sauce into a clean pan, discarding the shallots and garlic.

8 Add the crushed peppercorns, cream and Cognac and season with salt. Cook for 2–3 minutes, until slightly reduced and thickened. Keep warm.
9 Heat a griddle pan over a high heat. Brush the steaks with oil and season with salt and pepper. Cook for 3 minutes on each side for medium-rare or until cooked to your liking, adding the butter to the pan toward the end of cooking.
10 Serve the steaks with sautéed Savoy cabbage, potato slices and peppercorn sauce.

Photographer: **Philip Doyle**.
 Food styling: **Janine Kennedy**.

Decadent chocolate mousse cups

INGREDIENTS: Serves 4

225g plain chocolate, broken into squares (minimum 55% cocoa solids)

3 eggs

2 tbsp Coole Swan Irish cream liqueur (or you can use Grand Marnier, whiskey, Malibu or crème de menthe)

300ml cream

A selection of berries (such as raspberries, strawberries and pomegranate seeds)

A few sprigs of mint

METHOD

1 Melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water.

2 Whisk the eggs with the liqueur in a separate bowl over a pan of simmering water until double in size. It is very important to ensure the water does not boil or it will cook the eggs.

3 Fold the melted chocolate into the egg mixture, then leave to cool for 5 minutes.

4 Whisk the cream in a separate bowl and fold into the chocolate mixture. Pour the mousse into stemmed glasses or teacups using a spatula.

5 Cover with cling film and refrigerate for 2–3 hours or overnight.

6 Before serving, remove the cling film and add the fresh berries over the top, with an optional sprig of mint.



Cathal Ryan in a scene from his one-man show *PUCKED*, touring plenty of GAA strongholds during February and March.



‘This is my All-Ireland final, being a proud Tipp artist’

Camán to this comedic one-man show where Cathal Ryan brings hurling and drama together

There are not many professional actors from Tipperary; even fewer still combine treading the boards with playing in goals or centre forward in hurling. Cathal Ryan, who hails from The Ragg, near Thurles, has managed to marry his two great passions into a unique one-man show currently in the midst of a 12-date All-Ireland tour until mid-March.

Just like the game that inspired it, *PUCKED* is a fast-paced and often hilarious production where Cathal plays 27 dif-

ferent characters over 90 minutes. Audiences will get a chance to catch what he calls a “wild ride of a show full of colour, sound, and music” in Kilkenny, Nenagh, Longford, Tralee, Waterford, Ennis, and many more over the next few weeks.

The show follows young Matty, who has been immersed in the GAA from birth, and his one and only dream is to play on the senior team. After years of trying, he has finally made it, or has he?

“He thinks that’s him sorted now. For the rest of his life, he’s going to get the free gear, have a beautiful girlfriend

because he’s on the senior team, and bring pride to his parish,” says Cathal, the performer and writer of the one-man show.

“Matty then realises once he’s in that bubble that it’s not all it is cracked up to be, and maybe there’s a darker side to it too that he wasn’t aware of, and how he deals with that.”

While that might sound serious, Cathal says the one-man show is full of fun and laughs courtesy of a whole host of “characters that belong in every parish in Ireland” coming in and out of the action. Conscious that the show will attract many people who don’t normally go to the theatre through the GAA link, he and director Jack Reardon have created a great night out with a message.

“There’s great comedy in it, but [we

also capture] the energy of hurling. At one stage in the show, there is a full match, and there’s only one of me,” says Cathal, chuckling. “We kind of go to all of the spots that people in rural Ireland would have gone to growing up—the ball alley, the GAA club, the nightclub. It’s all there, and it’s all relatable and fast, hearty, and loud.”

Premier County

Hailing from the Premier County, there was no escaping hurling in his youth, and Cathal absolutely loved it. He played juvenile hurling with Durlas Óg before his parents moved out to The Ragg, later sporting the Drom and Inch colours from minor up for many years.

When he discovered theatre at 16

or 17, Cathal admits he felt the pressure of having to make a personal choice between it and hurling. There is a responsibility to a rural parish, where hurling is more than a club — you're part of something, he says.

For him to leave that and go on stage was a daunting thing to do as a young man, the performer concedes. He was worried what people thought, one of the themes of the play.

"Of course there are elements of autobiographical truth in it, but it's not a true story. I always say *PUCKED* is the story about Cathal Ryan if he didn't find acting or theatre," says the actor.

Having attended local plays since childhood, Cathal says he decided to join Inch Players, the local drama group, in his teens. He recalls fondly later being aged up with grey hair to play a doctor in one scene of *A Wake in the West*, his first play.

"It's where I started, and I wouldn't be here without that [first role] or taking that step to decide to go and join the group," he enthuses, adding that it was the first taste of the stage and the encouragement that drove him on.

"It's very social for me, and I enjoy it. It's something very unique about me, and maybe I used to be the hurler who acts; now I'm the actor who hurls"

Around the same time, a grand uncle was involved in Thurles Drama Group, who were on the competitive amateur drama circuit. The group reached the All-Ireland Drama Festival in Athlone where he says the standard is extremely high. A real turning point for him was seeing their production of *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller, which is still his favourite play.

"I was like Oh My God — this is what I need to do," he remembers, saying the feeling was completely different from hurling. "I mean, I [felt] I have a connection to this that is supreme to anything I felt with sport. This is where I belong."

That led to a decision to go to NUIG in Galway to do an arts with performing arts degree. There, he was "swallowed by the theatre bug" and learnt so much and gained vital experience in the societies.

After getting his parchment, Cathal was "privileged" to be accepted into The Lir Academy in Dublin, where there are only 16 places on offer every year, and people like Paul Mescal are among the famous alumni.

Cathal decided to stop hurling for a while to concentrate on his studies [in NUIG] and, ultimately, to see if he could make acting a career. Ironically, though, hurling didn't leave him altogether. The idea for the show came from his course and a particular class he found really exciting.

"While all the classes were great, the one that really resonated was my physical theatre class. My teacher was Bryan Burroughs, and that class was a huge inspiration behind *PUCKED*.

"We even did a module on one-man



Tipperary actor Cathal Ryan.

shows, and Bryan taught us to make a lot out of a little in the sense of, rather than having a cast of 27, do it all yourself. And then how to bring in a full hurling stadium [through a character] to just you on your own," says Cathal, who finished his BA in acting training in 2021.

When *Irish Country Living* initially caught up with the rising star recently, he was in the middle of learning lines. Rather than being daunted by the prospect of carrying a show on his own, he is excited about a "unique experience".

"In 2022, we did the show in Clonmel, Thurles and Waterford and my favourite compliment was that 'every young man should see this show' or 'you need to get every TY [student] in to see it'."

Peaks and troughs

Cathal is immensely proud of what he has created, and that is evident throughout our conversation. "I'd do this show a hundred times if I could," when asked if it will travel further after the February and March run.

He jokes that it's the closest thing to a child that he has, and he is looking forward to bringing it to many new venues.

"I never played for Tipperary, unfortunately, whereas now going on the road to these different venues seems like the closest thing I can come to representing my county. I suppose this is my All-Ireland final, being a proud Tipperary artist," he adds, taking a break from a school show where current Tipperary hurling manager Liam Cahill was among the audience.

Back hurling now with Civil Service GAA club in Dublin, where he is based, he now enjoys the sport simply as a pastime. It's an escape from his work and a lovely taste of home.

"It's very social for me, and I enjoy it. It's something very unique about me, and maybe I used to be the hurler who acts; now I'm the actor who hurls."

While Cathal accepts there will be peaks and troughs with an acting career, he reckons he has been very lucky so far. Last year was probably his best year yet; as part of Druid Theatre's *The House* by Tom Murphy.

When asked about future ambitions, he immediately mentions working with his hero Pat Shortt. "If I were ever to share a stage or film set with Pat, it would be a real dream. Being rural men, I'm sure there's a father and son written that we could do," says Cathal, laughing.

See @PUCKEDplay on Instagram.

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Cornus brings a fiery display

Colourful shrubs like the vibrant cornus brighten up cold, grey days and bring some interest

Paul Maher
Gardening



Our Irish winters can vary a lot, however, I find them predominantly grey. What I suggest is that you pack as much colour as possible into permanent planting, be that foliage or stems, as opposed to annual winter planting for colour. Colourful shrubs brighten those grey days.

The plants I use a lot are Cornus species, commonly called Dogwood. They never fail to charm and with minimum care and pruning can go on for very many years providing a spectacle that is to be looked forward to as much as creating memories.

I can well recall the first time I saw a clump of *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' in the distance in mid-winter – its stems glowing a sealing wax red colour almost like the dying embers of a fire. It was a wonderful spectacle. Seeing the same shrub during the summer months, equally delights with its bright cream and grey green leaves. It grows to a height of two metres and similar in width.

Cornus alba 'Sibirica' creates the same effect but with richer red stems, again looking its best during winter. Here the foliage is green, turning a red colour during autumn followed by the wonderful display of colourful stems. It grows to a height of 1.5m.

With these red stemmed varieties, I underplant with masses of yellow Winter Aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis*, it is a ground cover plant to a height of 150mm. Once you plant them they happily spread of their own accord and come back every January into February.

Cornus sericea 'Flaviramea' is a suckering shrub with lime green almost yellow stems and green foliage to a height of 1.8m. Again, the foliage is green for the summer season, then giving a display of red autumn colour.

Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire' is a spectacle to behold, while others look fiery, these twiggy stems look like bright yellow flames, with scarlet red tips. The light green foliage turns yellow in autumn and persists before the main winter

display of stems. It grows to a height of almost 2m.

Of similar stature and colour although not as fiery is *Cornus sanguinea* 'Winter Beauty'. It has bright green foliage turning a yellow in autumn, followed by the winter display of stems.

Cornus alba 'Kesselringii' is a beautiful plant in winter with almost black stems. It is a strong grower to over 2m with green leaves over the summer months providing good autumn colour before revealing its black stems. I have seen this grow to best effect mixed with *Stipa tenuissima*, a low growing grass that has the wonderful quality of moving with the slightest breeze. An amazing combination.

Suits most soils

Cornus species suit our climate and most soils. They like rich moist soil; however, you can easily achieve this with the addition of organic matter at planting time and ongoing mulching thereafter.

If space allows plant cornus in groups of three or more as the spectacle is even more impressive and as I have described underplant with the aforementioned. The choice is yours but base your selection on woodland plants. The underplanting should of course be equally dense.

Pruning of cornus is best carried out before the growth starts and there are several ways gardeners undertake this. Some cut all stems to the ground forcing the plants into spurts of massive growth through spring into summer. Others cut about half



Cornus sanguinea has red stems, and looks fantastic when planted with evergreen shrubs. ViStock

of the stems to the ground allowing for a partial regrowth alternating the following winter.

Feeding is the key after pruning. I suggest using pelleted chicken manure scattered around the plant in line with the manufacturer's recommendation. This is also a good time to mulch as heavily as you can to a depth of 75mm or thereabouts. Do this work after you give the

ground a good soaking.

The cut stems can be used for propagating new plants which is easily achieved by inserting hardwood cuttings, 300mm in length, in slit trenches 30mm wide and the depth of a spade in the garden where there may be some spare space preferably in light shade.

It can take up to a year to produce more delightful plants.



To-do list

Trees, shrubs and roses: Check all plants for wind rock and stabilise, check plant ties and secure if loosened. Start rose pruning. Continue with bare root planting.

Flowers: Prepare for seed sowing, wash all pots and pans in soapy water, start seed ordering.

Lawn: Continue to cut in dry weather, scarify with a spring tined rake to remove moss.

Fruit, vegetables and herbs: Continue with any fruit planting in dry weather, fork over vegetable plots ensure they are weed free, start seed ordering, order seed potatoes.

Greenhouse and house plants: Continue to check heat especially in frosty weather, plan for cleaning greenhouse glass.

Q&A: My roses are falling over

My roses are loose and falling over after storm Éowyn. What should I do? Will they survive? – Tony, Co Wexford



You can refill the hole and compact it. ViStock

Your roses have what we call wind rock, this occurs after windy or stormy weather. Saturated soil also does not give sufficient support. Roses and indeed other shrubs will rock to and fro to the point where they create a circular gap at soil level and look unsteady. It can also be the case with regard to roses that the top growth was too heavy at the onset of winter.

Fork the ground very lightly around the roses, loosening the soil so as you can refill the hole. Compact it with the heel of your boot while holding the rose in the upright position. You are, of course, now almost at rose pruning time, this will reduce the weight of stems further.

Tullamore Rugby Club had no female teams when it was first set up – it now has a number of women's and girls' sides up to senior level. Pictured is Roisin Feighery of Tullamore RFC in the centre. \ Ben McShane Sportsfile



Tullamore the merrier as club doubles in size

Surviving and thriving are challenges for provincial rugby clubs, but the president of the Offaly set-up says the overall outlook is positive

Denis Hurley
Sport



We are now firmly in the grip of Six Nations fever, with a trip to Murrayfield in store for the Irish team this weekend.

Though there might be the odd worry that the current team's cycle has peaked and a third straight title will be hard to achieve, by and large there are few concerns regarding the health of the game at the very top tier.

The hope in such a situation is that the elite level can bring benefits for those further down the chain. Thankfully, Tullamore RFC president Johnny Burns is able to report that there is a trickle-down effect as well as a trickle-up.

The day before Ireland clash with Scotland, Tullamore take on Monkstown

in Division 2C of the Energia All-Ireland League at their Spollanstown home. Competing at the highest level of amateur domestic rugby is hard, but beyond the first team, Tullamore is emblematic of the growth in rugby as a whole.

As well as holding a multitude of roles on the committee, Johnny has been involved in coaching teams in the club. He was part of the set-up when they progressed from junior rugby to the AIL 11 years ago – as well as canvassing the schools in the area for new recruits.

In 19 years of undertaking the latter role, he has seen the number of the teams in Tullamore double.

"We wouldn't have had any female involvement at that stage," he says. "Now have two mini teams, under-14, under-16 and under-18 girls as well as the seniors.

"In boys' rugby, we always had under-7 up to under-12 and then the youths was every second year – under-13, 15, and 17 – now it's every year, up to under-18.

"We had four adult men's teams last year, this year we have three. Most of that is due to emigration."

The increase in numbers presents infrastructural challenges – more dressing rooms when the female side of the club was established, a quest to build more

pitches – and fundraising and the seeking of grants are rarely off the to-do list. The rising cost of electricity is no joke for an organisation using floodlights most nights of the week, but having them means that adult teams can play on a Friday night.

Location, location

While reaching the AIL is a feather in the cap of any provincial club, there are of course greater costs associated with that – though, as Johnny points out, location is a help in that regard.

"You look at the likes of Omagh or Midleton, they nearly have to stay overnight, the night before and the night of the match," says Johnny.

"Obviously, their bus costs would be big too, so it's an expensive business.

"We don't have that as much, being in the midlands, but even so, going to Belfast, like we did recently, is a five-and-a-half-hour round-trip and a 12-hour day."

Location can be something of a double-edged sword though, in terms of human resources. The rugby system means that juvenile players must choose between schools and club rugby but the only rugby-playing school nearby is Cistercian College, Roscrea. Johnny coached there



Tullamore RFC president Johnny Burns (right) with Cormac Izuchukwu of Ulster, who began his career with the Offaly side.

for a decade, encompassing the historic Leinster Schools Senior Cup win of 2015. That means that there isn't a huge drop-off in under-age numbers in Tullamore.

"That's a particular difficulty for the city clubs. Not many of them would have an under-age structure.

"We have to produce from the ground up, from minis up, you get them in young and you're hoping to keep them all together. The odd one will go away to a rugby-playing school but the bulk of them will go to school locally," explains Johnny.

"On the flipside then, when those players get older, the city clubs in Galway, Limerick, Cork and Dublin have the benefit of having colleges and the clubs there are looking for players.

"We have no college locally that people will come to and then end up joining the club. We have players working in Dublin now that will travel down to play – you're relying on a certain level of loyalty but you still have to make it as attractive as possible for them to want to do that.

"That means playing at as high a level as we can but also providing a good club atmosphere. We're a community club at the end of the day"

That's why the "trickle-up" is so important. Last November, Cormac Izuchukwu, now with Ulster, having begun in Tullamore made his senior debut for Ireland against Fiji. The club's fingerprint can also be seen on players at senior, under-20 and sevens levels across both men's and women's Ireland teams.

"It helps when people see players who have gone through the club and gone on to be successful," Johnny says. "They are all very good in coming back to us and giving back.

"Ireland and Leinster doing well has had a knock-on effect too, and then there's a good relationship between the club and the schools in the area.

"I cover a total of 26 schools over the course of a season, going in and encouraging the students to give it a try.

"It's grand when they're minis, they're playing a lot of sports and it's generally just one day a week, but then they go up to under-16 and 17, they nearly have to make a decision, because it gets more serious and time-consuming.

"What you're hoping for is to have the trickle effect both ways – the fact Ireland and Leinster are doing well helps to draw them in but they have to enjoy the experience in the club as well."



Going, going, gone – find a career under the hammer

Auctioneers play a major role in the agricultural sector in rural Ireland, and there are many different pathways into this vital career

By Sarah McIntosh

Whether it is selling livestock in a busy cattle mart ring or working on property sales, auctioneers play a vital role in the agriculture sector by being the link between buyers and sellers. They are responsible for creating a transparent marketplace where a fair market value is determined through competitive bidding.

Auctioneers ensure sellers achieve the best possible prices for their goods in line with the value of the product being sold. Their expertise in agricultural markets helps optimise timing and sales strategies, making them indispensable in driving the rural economy and supporting agricultural trade.

With the changing landscape of livestock and property sales, it can be a challenging area to work in, but opportunities do exist with beef prices at a high and property at a premium. At the same time, there are a lot of young people exploring auctioneering as a career.

The average salary range for an auctioneer is between €29,275 and €62,820, according to Economic Research Institute (ERI). The economic organisation states that the average pay for an auctioneer is €50,825 a year and €24 an hour in Ireland.

There are many different pathways into auctioneering, some people go into full-time education which would be quite



Auctioneer George Candler at the Kilkenny Co-Op Livestock Mart at Cillin Hill. \ Patrick Browne

common, while others study it on a part-time course basis.

The certificate in auctioneering and estate agency is a two-year full-time course that focuses on the valuation and sale of residential property. Those who achieve the required standards at the certificate level may progress to the diploma - one extra year of study.

The Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers, in partnership with Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS) and TU Dublin Tallaght, offers the delivery of a special award that satisfies the requirements of the Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) for the A licence only. Graduates who have completed the Teagasc level 6 green cert and are working for a mart which is a member of ICOS are eligible to apply for this award based on their qualifications.

Degree pathways include a BSc in Auctioneering, Valuation and Estate Agency (TU731) or BSc (Hons) in Property Economics (TU836) Technological University of Dublin. Along with a BSc (Hons)



in Quantity Surveying (SE704) from the South East Technological University. In Ireland, the Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) issues licences for property auctioneers. Minimum requirements include education, qualifications, or relevant experience. Auctioneers must also provide a tax clearance certificate, professional indemnity insurance, and an accountant's report. Additionally, they must pay a fee to the Property Services Compensation Fund and a licence fee, which varies based on their role.

Auctioneering regulations

Auctioneers, estate agents, letting agents and property management agents must be licensed and regulated by the authority. This applies to property located in the Republic of Ireland and to transactions in Ireland which relate to property located abroad.

You can apply for your licence online from the PRSA licensing office. Some auctioneers also require additional registration. For instance, livestock auctioneers

register with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Auctioneers provide services only for the items their licence covers.

Licence categories include:

- Type A: For auctioning items other than land (eg, machinery and animals).
- Type B: For purchasing or selling land, including buildings.
- Type C: For letting land, including buildings.
- Type D: For property management services.

George Candler: Kilkenny Co-Op Livestock Mart

Originally from Roscommon, George Candler has over 50 years of experience as an auctioneer. During his time holding the hammer, he has seen significant changes in the ring. A big one is the decline in the number of animals at cattle sales and advancements in marking of livestock.

"My dad was the founding chairman of Roscommon Mart in 1959, which is how I got involved during my holidays.

EXAMS

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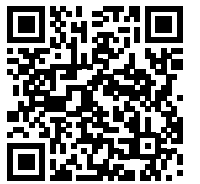
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SCAN ME

Who has made a job move in ag?



Auctioneer George Candler at Kilkenny Co-Op Livestock Mart.
Philip Doyle

Auctioneering was relatively new then, but I thought I might have a chance at this. The numbers in marts were mega with more smaller farmers bringing livestock," he says.

Moving to Kilkenny as a trainee auctioneer in 1972, George intended on going back to Roscommon to farm because he was the only son. He never got back, however, and has remained in Kilkenny Mart since.

He wasn't always confident in the ring, George recalls, remembering his very first time selling.

"I got up to sell this calf and I thought I was selling the calf for 20 minutes and the seller of the calf was giving out asking why they let this young lad up there. But it turns out he got a good price for it.

"He came up to me 20 years later reminding me his calf was the first I sold," says George.

It is difficult to make money in the running of livestock marts at present, according to George, given the amount of overhead costs, fees and less animals

coming into the ring. He attributes part of that difficulty to the "decline of the suckler herd".

At the same time, the livestock price is high, and George has never seen animals as dear.

In relation to the future, he says, "It's going to be dictated by supply and demand which I feel is not beneficial to marts, if you don't have the numbers, you won't attract the buyers."

When George got into auctioneering there was no actual qualification, he studied under Alexis FitzGerald.

"You need to know your cattle, your customer, the buyer and seller and you want to know if it is a good or poor animal because in the moment you have seconds to decide what the animal is worth. It was a different ballgame," he says.

George got into pedigree sales which is different to the norm as you're looking at higher prices along with buyers coming in from Scotland or Germany.

There was never a Monday when George was dreading going to work. He



Ciaran Hennessy from Hennessy Auctioneers in Portlaoise, Co Laois.

continues doing three sales a week which 'keeps the head active'.

Ciaran Hennessy: Hennessy Auctioneers, Portlaoise

With his family's long-standing involvement in the auction business, it was inevitable that Ciaran would be interested in auctioneering being around the sales ring from a young age.

"I grew up around auctioneers, my grandfather bought the cattle mart in Portlaoise back in the 80s. That closed down in the early 90s around the time of foot and mouth.

"My father got involved in the business and when the cattle mart closed, we started doing machinery auctions with property, trading under the name Hennessy Auctioneers," he says.

With a strong interest in numbers and business, Ciaran went on to study business and law at UCD, while spending every weekend helping out at the auctions and on his family's beef and tillage farm in Stradbally.

After college Ciaran became a chartered accountant and worked in KPMG for five years. Staying in the agri-food space he worked as an accountant with Ornua before moving to ABP.

He joined the family business full-time in 2021, looking after the machinery auctions. His father John and his wife Olive manage the property side of the business. The business sells an average of 500 acres of land annually and 5,000 acres of leases.

With a neighbour retiring down the road, Ciaran is leasing his farm after getting his green cert in Gurteen Agricultural

College during COVID-19. This enabled Ciaran to do a top-up course in IPAV to obtain his A category licence, which means he can sell livestock, machinery and horses.

"I can assist from an administration point of view but I can't legally sell the property. That's why I look after the machinery side of things. It was a straightforward course, and in time, I can go on to get my other licence but that would mean further education and at the moment I am too busy," explains Ciaran.

Online auctions have revolutionised the machinery and livestock trade as people are now able to access sales from the comfort of their homes.

"My father got involved in the business and when the cattle mart closed, we started doing machinery auctions with property, trading under the name Hennessy Auctioneers"

In terms of opportunities for young people, Ciaran says auctioneering has become an attractive career for those interested in dealing with people.

"With the buying and selling, there's a serious buzz off it. There's not a large number of jobs in it which is a challenge. They are limited but there are a lot of auctioneers getting older which will bring opportunities [in the future]," Ciaran predicts.

Tried 'n' tested – how students can make the most of mocks

A trial run provides Junior and Leaving Cert pupils with the opportunity to take stock of their knowledge and practise exam day timings ahead of the big tests over the summer

By Sarah McIntosh

This time of year can be stressful for teachers, parents, and, of course, students, with mock exams underway across the country. It's important to stay calm and be prepared to give yourself the best chance of success. No exam is easy, especially one that simulates the biggest one of all for the young students, the results of which have a major bearing on their future prospects. It can bring a sense of dread and uncertainty because it often happens at a time when students haven't finished the course or their revision.

All of the mock tests are a practice run for the real thing, and they also provide an opportunity for students to test themselves in a real-life setting. The mocks should be used to highlight where a student is in terms of knowledge and expected grades.

Practical preparation tips

1 Practise past papers: Familiarise yourself with the format and types of questions that are likely to come up in an exam by completing all available past papers. This is the best way to ensure you know what the structure of each exam is going to be like as they all vary. There are some subjects in which you need to answer all sections of the paper, with others giving you an option.

It's important to know this going into each exam so you can avoid leaving a full section blank or incomplete. Time yourself to simulate real exam conditions so you can get used to working against the clock.

2 Review key concepts: It can be overwhelming to think you need to learn every subject and topic off by heart. You should focus on understanding core concepts rather than just memorising facts. Use flashcards, or mind maps to reinforce your knowledge. If you prepare these as you go for each subject, you will have a full set for final revision in June.

Flashcards and mind maps are also a great tool for visual learners. In an exam, you will be able to imagine that topic or piece of paper, and hopefully, draw on the contents to answer the question.

3 Take regular breaks: When students are cramming or trying to fit in as many hours of study as possible in the week of their mocks, it is easy to get burnt out. It's not possible to sit at a desk for long periods of time and remain focused. Students need to make sure to take regular breaks to stay motivated.



After the mocks, review your results carefully to understand what went well and where you can improve. iStock

Follow the 25-5 or 50-10 rule; study for 25–50 minutes, then take a short 5–10-minute break to recharge your focus before returning to the desk.

4 Stay healthy: It might sound simple, but students often don't prioritise looking after themselves during the exam season. To perform at your best, it's essential to maintain a balanced diet, stay hydrated, and ensure you get at least eight hours of sleep each night to keep your mind sharp.

Avoid overloading with caffeine or junk food as the stimulants mean your blood sugar levels peak, leaving your system off balance.

5 Use active revision techniques: Engage in active learning, such as teaching a topic to someone else, writing essays from memory, or creating diagrams to simplify information. This can help

with memory retention and efficiency.

6 Prepare for exam day: Lay out everything you need the night before (pens, pencils, calculator, etc) and plan your route, alarms and timing to avoid unnecessary stress on the day.

7 Create a study schedule: Plan a realistic revision timetable that covers all your subjects, breaking down topics into manageable chunks. Prioritise areas

where you feel less confident and spend more time on them.

A lot of students end up cramming for their mocks because of how quickly the exams sneak up after Christmas. If this is you, it's important to set out a study schedule from now until the real thing in June.

8 Learn from your mistakes: After the mocks, review your results carefully to understand what went well and where you can improve. Use this feedback to refine your revision before the real exams.

By following these tips, you'll approach your mocks with confidence, clarity, and a solid foundation for success.

Just remember at the end of the day these exams are a practice run; you will have time over the next four months to work on areas that need improving. Consider the mocks to be a dress rehearsal.

“Plan a realistic revision timetable that covers all your subjects, breaking down topics into manageable chunks”



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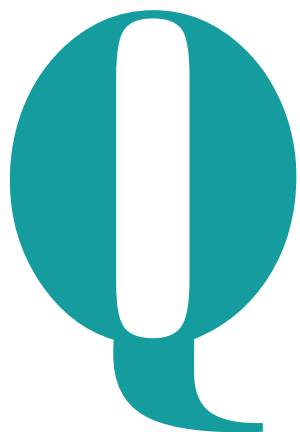
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Aisling Meehan Legal Advice



The legal and practical aspects to consider when building or renovating



I am considering building a house on a site on the family farm.

My parents would prefer if I did up the farmhouse they live in and to build on separate living quarters but my partner is not too keen.

She gets on with my parents but equally wants space and a modern

well-insulated house. How do we go about getting the site transferred? And what do we need to consider when trying to get a mortgage for a new build?



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Planning permission is generally sought before the site is transferred. \iStock

What to consider when building on the farm

ANSWER: Increased building costs, difficulty in securing planning permission and the availability of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (VPRG) has resulted in a fall off in the number of adult children taking a site to build a house on the farm.

So it is worth considering where the existing farmhouse fits into the overall picture. Many families nowadays are considering renovating the family home and building on separate living quarters for one or other generations.

That said, with parents living longer and wanting independence, there is generally a desire to have two houses to facilitate generational renewal on farms.

Planning permission

Planning permission is generally sought before the site is transferred in case the position of the house needs to change with planning considerations. You will then have to organise a valuation both for the bank, as part of the mortgage, and also to ascertain how much tax, if any, is due arising from the site transfer.

The bank will provide you with a list of their approved valuers and you will need to instruct one from that list.

As the planning permission is specific to the applicant and generally there is a requirement to occupy it as a home for a minimum period of time, this impacts the market value of the site.

For the site transfer, you will also

need to furnish your solicitor with a land registry compliant map of the site to be transferred, as marked out by an engineer.

If the site does not bound a public road, the engineer will have to mark out a right of way to get to that site on the same map. You should ensure that the map of the site encompasses whatever other services are required, eg septic tank, percolation area, water supply to a well if necessary.

You and your parents will need to be independently advised by your respective solicitors in relation to the site transfer. If you are getting a residential mortgage, your solicitor can act for you and the bank in putting that in place. To save time and expense, it would be worth having the legal documentation to have the site transferred and the mortgage documentation signed at the same time.

Consequently, you should contact your bank and ask them to forward the mortgage pack to your solicitor so that they have it available when you attend him/her to have the site transfer documentation signed up.

Income tax rebate

You could potentially qualify for the income tax rebate for first time buyer's worth up to €30,000. The Help-to-Buy incentive consists of a rebate of income tax paid over the previous four years.

To qualify for the scheme, applicants must take out a mortgage of at least 70% of the purchase price (or, for a self-build, 70% of the valuation approved by the mortgage provider). To claim the relief, you must be a first-time buyer, buy or build a house between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2029 and live in the property as your main home for five years after you buy or build it.

Stamp duty refund scheme

Where a site is transferred, stamp duty at 7.5% will apply to the transfer. However if you commence building on the land within 30 months of the date that the site was transferred (and before 31 December 2025), you can qualify for a refund of a maximum of 11/15th's of the stamp duty if you paid at the 7.5% rate.

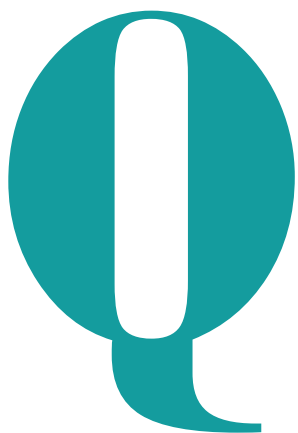
You must complete building work within two years of the Local Authority acknowledging the notice as valid and claim your refund within four years of that date.

Disclaimer: The information in this article is intended as a guide only. While every care is taken to ensure accuracy of information contained in this article, Aisling Meehan, Agricultural Solicitors and Tax Consultants does not accept responsibility for errors or omissions howsoever arising. Email aisling@agri-solicitors.ie

Andrew Brolly
Financial Advice



Breaking down ways to manage rising bills and business costs



Myself and my partner own and run a small business alongside our farm to supplement our income, and it's something we really enjoy. However, each year, the costs of running the business appear to be increasing. We seem to be constantly paying more and more for insurance, electricity, phone, gas and other expenses. Is there anything we can do to stop these creeping up each year, or is it just the way it has gone with inflation?



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How can we bring down our expenses?



Overhead cost control is crucial when tackling your finances.
iStock

ANSWER: Without a doubt, the cost of doing business has increased significantly in recent times. Quite often, we see businesses focus on the cost of sales and maintaining a strong gross profit margin.

However, overhead cost control is crucial. Let's tease out the steps you can take to reduce your business costs.

Managing bills

When you first enter into a contract for services, such as electricity, gas, landline and broadband, the offers from every provider are usually quite attractive.

However, the cost after the contract period is often much less attractive! If you haven't switched in a while, compare last year's bill to that of the year in which you switched and it is likely you will see a noticeable difference. You can see as much as double the price. It is important to constantly switch providers or negotiate a new contract.

Today, many people in rural Ireland – although not all – enjoy access to super-fast broadband. If you have multiple landlines in your business, now may be the time to consider the switch to an internet-based service (VoIP). It is often at a lower cost than traditional landlines and offers more flexibility in terms of adding or removing a line.

Trying to stay on top of contracts for multiple utilities can be a pain. There is help with this, however, and a quick Google search will provide multiple providers who get you the best deals. You simply provide them with some recent bills, and they get to work on finding

you the best options. What's more, it is in their interest to follow up prior to the expiration of your contract in 12 months' time, so it is less likely that you will end up being out of contract and paying those higher charges.

Insurance

Everyone can be guilty of sticking with the same insurance provider as it is convenient, and it seems like a hassle to have to dig out the cover schedule and send it to other providers for quotes. The reality is that insurance should be reviewed annually, not just from a cost point of view, but to ensure that your level of cover reflects your business needs.

In terms of managing the cost of insurance, there are multiple online and locally based insurance brokers who you can provide your current cover

information to, and they will seek the best premiums for you. Even more importantly, they will assess the level of coverage that you have and ensure that you are not under or over-insured.

Other steps you can take

There are multiple options available that could help you significantly reduce some of your overhead costs.

In terms of the light and heating of your business, you could avail of various SEAI grants, including solar panel installation, a solar thermal hot water grant, wall and roof fabric upgrade grants, as well as the installation of new heat pumps, AI handling units and efficient control units. Access to these grants is not as complicated as you might think, either.

A €2,000 grant is available to get a professional energy audit carried out on your business, and they will advise you on the best actions to take and how much they should cost.

Aside from the obvious benefits of a more energy-efficient business and the savings to be made, is the fact that you can claim accelerated capital allowances also, which would allow you to deduct the full cost of the equipment (after grants) from your profits in the year of purchase rather than over a period of eight years for example. This tax saving could be significant for sole traders who are paying tax at the higher rate of 40%.

Andrew Brolly is a senior accountant with ifac

IN SHORT

- Make the time to shop around. Utility management providers can prevent you from running out of contract and, as a result, save your business money.
- Employing the services of an insurance broker could lead to better cover and lower premiums.
- Do not rule out upgrades to your building. Significant grants and accelerated capital allowances are available and worthy of consideration.

Property Plus

Compiled by Tommy Moyles tmoyles@farmersjournal.ie



The 137ac non-residential dairy farm will be auctioned in early March; above, the 10-unit milking parlour has Orby feeders; below, a three-bay double sided slatted shed is the main structure in the yard.



€2m guide for Wexford dairy farm at auction

A 137ac non-residential dairy farm has plenty of livestock accommodation and is very accessible

WEXFORD

By Tommy Moyles

A substantial non-residential dairy farm in Co Wexford has recently come on the market and will go for online auction in early March. Located at Monagreana, Monamolin, the 137ac dairy holding with a good selection of farm buildings is on the books of Quinn Property and has a guide price of €15,000/ac.

Currently all in grass, the land is of excellent quality and has been farmed to

a high standard. It's all in one block and divided into 13 large fields via a series of mature hedgerows. These are further split into paddocks, all of which have a piped water supply. A network of internal farm roadways – extending to well in excess of 1km – allow easy access to livestock and machinery from the yard.

Cow accommodation

A short driveway leads from the public road to a yard that has ample cow accommodation with a number of cubicle houses present. Included in the yard are a six-bay shed with 68 cubicle spaces and a double slurry tank, a six-bay cubicle shed with automatic scrapers, a range of calving boxes and a three-bay A-roof calf rearing

house. Further accommodation is available in the form of a four-bay slatted shed with feed passage.

There are a pair of open silage pits and a three-bay round roof shed with silage walls that has a lean-to on either side. The milking parlour is a 10-unit and comes with a roofed and slatted collecting yard.

This property is available in its entire or in three lots. Lot 1 contains 65.6ac and the outbuildings, Lot 2 extends to 49.2ac while the balance of the land, 21.8ac is included in Lot 3.

Located just 3km from the village of Monamolin, this farm is also 5km from Boolavogue while the R471 road between Gorey and Wexford town is a similar distance away. If that wasn't enough connec-

tivity, the N11 can be accessed at Camolin, 7km away.

That puts it within a 20 minutes' drive radius of a lot of agricultural activity in a noted farming county and there's every likelihood it will continue in dairy production. It has the infrastructure to do so. Good slurry storage, a functional yard with good cow accommodation and the fact it's all in one block could easily see it be used as an outside unit for an existing dairy farm.

There's likely to be many interested spectators when this prime grassland farm goes under the hammer.

The auction takes place at noon on Tuesday, 4 March 2025 on the LSL Auctions online platform.

►MAYO

Compact Connacht holdings in Mayo and Roscommon



►KERRY

East Kerry holding with forestry premia and entitlements



►SCAN ME

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Free Land Report in this week's paper

Land prices rose in 2024 to an average of €12,515/ac, according to the *Irish Farmers Journal* Agricultural Land Price Report 2024, free inside this week's paper. This was an increase of 5% on the prices of the year before.

The report found that the land market got off to a very slow start in 2024, affected by the wet spring and low farmer confidence. It was May before land finally dried out and sales really got underway. Among other notable developments, prices fell in the main dairy counties.

A number of counties saw buoyant sales and higher prices. It was a hectic year in Co Meath with a large number of big farms of top quality land, in tillage as well as grass, put up



for public auction and sold at very high prices. Average farmland prices in Co Meath rose by 23% on the previous year to €17,669/ac. Only two other counties had higher prices last year.

Land prices rose by 8% in Co Wexford to €17,771/ac, giving it the second highest prices in the country. There was strong demand there for all

properties, big and small, residential and non-residential. Land prices were also up in Clare, Galway and Roscommon.

Land prices continued on their rising trend in Northern Ireland, increasing by 7% in 2024. Prices are highest in Co Armagh. This buoyancy is spilling across into border counties and helped prices to rise by 18% in Co Monaghan to average €12,495/ac.

Despite the wet, slow start, the year finished on a high with prices for milk and livestock improved, farmer confidence back up and superb weather. Land auctions ran up to 19 December with excellent results for sellers.

- PAUL MOONEY



Ridgewood House is in excellent condition.

Stunning equine holding stands out

KILDARE

Jordan Auctioneers have just launched a magnificent residence with stables in the heart of the Curragh.

Ridgewood House, Maddenstown, The Curragh, Co Kildare is an exceptional detached family home set on c3.2ac of grass. It comes with a triple garage and a stable

block containing four boxes.

The stables are to the side of the house and an access point from them leads to the land. Mature hedgerows form the outer boundary of the property, and post and rail fencing separates the dwelling from the grass paddock that surrounds it.

Electric gates give way to a sweeping gravel drive

that leads to the house that was constructed in 2009 and extends to 3,300 sq ft.

A modern energy efficient home, it has geothermal underfloor heating, sash double glazed windows and a central vacuum system.

The ground floor accommodation includes a kitchen/dining/living room that has fitted cream hand-crafted units and granite worktops. There is also a drawing room, office/playroom, utility room, guest toilet and bedroom on the first floor.

Upstairs there is a master bedroom with a walk-in wardrobe, an ensuite, a main bathroom and two further bedrooms.

Situated over 1km from the world-famous Curragh Plains, it's within easy reach of the M7 motorway and a number of local towns too.

The property is for sale by private treaty and auctioneer, Liam Hargaden, is guiding it at €850,000.

- TOMMY MOYLES



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FOR MORE INFO

Pair of compact Connacht holdings 'ideal opportunity for young farmer'

ROSCOMMON/MAYO

Ballyhaunis-based APP Korrane Auctioneering have a pair of similar sized properties in the border area between Roscommon and Mayo on the market. Included is a circa 33.7ac residential farm with some farm buildings at Moigh Lower, Cloonfad, Ballyhaunis, Co Roscommon.

Guided at €225,000, the land is of good quality and is suitable for fattening cattle. It's all in one block and laid out in a number of fields divided by mature hedgerows. A yard is located at the centre of it and this includes a three-bay double sided slatted shed, concrete farmyard and a cattle crush. The yard is accessed via a laneway from the public road and there is also an old house there.

The dwelling is a



The residence was built in the 1950s and has three bedrooms; right, the yard contains a hay barn.



three-bedroom bungalow constructed in the 1950s and it's in need of a full overhaul. As the residence hasn't been lived in for some time it should qualify for the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (VPRG) of €50,000 and further energy up-grade grants from Sustain-

able Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

There is also an option to purchase the house on 0.5ac separately from the land and it has a guide price of €45,000. It's situated on a block of land close to the yard and is 4km from the village of Cloonfad and 15 minutes'

drive from Ballyhaunis.

The second property is across the border in Co Mayo and consists of c35ac of land at Tawnaghmore, Ballyhaunis.

The lands known locally as Cullineys are 6km

northeast of Ballyhaunis and are described as typical of the area. It's all in one block and over 30ac of it contains good agricultural land, while the balance is poorer quality and runs down to Lough Annamona and the border between Roscommon and Mayo.

The property, auctioneer, Kevin Korrane said; "There is good road frontage on the eastern side of it and scope for a house to be built there.

"It's an ideal opportunity for a young farmer to get their own herd number and build a family home. It's also a sizeable farm to add to an existing farm."

He has a guide price of €300,000 on this east Mayo farm.

- TOMMY MOYLES



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The small bungalow on circa. one acre features three bedrooms, a living/dining area, kitchen, and bathroom, making it an ideal choice for those seeking a cozy rural retreat. Additionally, the house is eligible for grants under the Vacant Homes Grant Scheme, potentially qualifying for up to €70,000 (subject to necessary approvals). It is also eligible for SEAI grants, offering excellent opportunities for property improvements.

The land is of medium quality, suitable for a variety of agricultural activities. The property also boasts an impressive range of outbuildings, including a hayshed, lean-to, and multiple storage sheds. A standout feature is the large steel construction arched tunnel-shaped shed, which offers substantial space ideal for a farm nursery, storage, equestrian or other agricultural uses.

Additional amenities on the property include a cattle crush, providing the perfect facility for managing livestock. The stunning setting provides breathtaking views over the surrounding countryside, with the added benefit of being close to Roscommon town, making it ideal for those seeking a peaceful rural lifestyle with convenient access to local amenities.

The versatile tunnel-shaped shed offers potential for a variety of uses, from nursery and storage to other farming-related projects, adding further value to the property. With ample space, potential for grant assistance, and a prime location, this property offers something for everyone.

Viewing is highly recommended to fully appreciate the scope and potential this property has to offer.



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East Kerry holding with forestry premia

KERRY

Killarney-based auctioneer, Tom Spillane has a c45ac non-residential farm that is only 15 minutes' drive from the centre of the famous Kerry town. The land at Knockinanane East, Killarney is for sale by private treaty and the auctioneer says there has been good interest in it to date.

The farm is the second last holding in a cul-de-sac and benefits from a private setting.

About 30ac of it are a mix of open fields and rough grazing and would be suitable for a grazing enterprise or for planting with forestry.

The balance of the land – about one third of it – was planted with Sitka

Spruce in the last decade and there are 13 more years' worth of payments left to run on these. The annual income from this comes to €3,534.

Also included in the sale are 22 entitlements which are valued at €126.50 each. Combined with the forestry premia, the annual payments these generate come to over €6,000 per annum.

This property is well served by a good road network. It's 7km from Barraduff and the N72 road that links Killarney and Mallow while the N22 road to Macroom is 13km away at Glenflesk.

There is a guide price of €220,000 on this east Kerry farm.

- TOMMY MOYLES

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Natural water supply, ideal small holding or addition to existing farming enterprise
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LOT 1: A Residential Farm c.47.80ac/19.35ha with two storey farmhouse and a range of farm buildings including 2 x 3 bay slatted cattle sheds and a silage base.

LOT 2: Old Farmhouse in need of renovation situated on c.1.83ac/0.74ha mains water connected, with ESB/ Broadband nearby. Situated 100m off the road, with access via a private tree lined Avenue incorporating a river running through the property, ideally located 1 min from N3.

LOT 3: A non-residential farm c.10.0ac/4.04ha with 550m road frontage, all in pasture. Good quality land, suitable for any enterprise.

LOT 4: The entire property.

For further details please contact our office on 046 92 41888



HENNESSY

AUCTIONEERS
TOWN & COUNTRY

For Sale by Online Auction

17.4 Acres of Prime Land at Capoling, Portlaoise, Co. Laois

Online Auction Thursday 6th March 2025 at 2pm via the LSI Platform



- This land is held under a lease agreement. It is currently in permanent pasture and is suitable for arable.
- It is conveniently located just off the R405 with Portlaoise town approx. 2km. The Property will be sold by online auction on the LSI Auction Platform. All intending bidders must register with Hennessy Auctioneers by 1pm on Wednesday 26th March with a holding deposit will need to be paid prior to the sale.

Solicitor for the sale of the land: James E. Cahill & Co Solicitors Ltd
11, Canal Street, Dublin 1, Co. Dublin (Telephone 01 454 2452)

For Sale by Online Auction

12.6 Acres of Prime Land at Camah, Enniscorthy, Co. Wick

Online Auction Thursday 6th March 2025 at 2pm via the LSI Platform



- This land is held under a lease agreement. It is currently in permanent pasture and is suitable for arable.
- It is conveniently located just off the R405 with Enniscorthy town approx. 2km. The Property will be sold by online auction on the LSI Auction Platform. All intending bidders must register with Hennessy Auctioneers by 1pm on Wednesday 26th March with a holding deposit will need to be paid prior to the sale.

Solicitor for the sale of the land: James E. Cahill & Co Solicitors Ltd
11, Canal Street, Dublin 1, Co. Dublin (Telephone 01 454 2452)

For Sale by Online Auction

67 Acres Farm Holding at Kesh, Co. Wick

Online Auction Friday 26th March 2025 at 2pm via the LSI Platform



- This farm holding consists of a mix of arable land & old pasture land (mostly by water).
- The property comes with an old eight room house.
- It is located approx 2km from Kesh town (approx 10 min drive to Kesh town).
- The land is divided into 3 separate lots:

1. 20.00 Acres Pasture Land with old temporary
2. 20.00 Acres Pasture Land
3. 27.00 Acres Pasture Land

The Property will be sold by online auction on the LSI Auction Platform. All intending bidders must register with Hennessy Auctioneers by 1pm on Wednesday 26th March with a holding deposit will need to be paid prior to the sale.

Solicitor for the sale of the land: James E. Cahill & Co Solicitors Ltd
11, Canal Street, Dublin 1, Co. Dublin (Telephone 01 454 2452)

For Sale by Online Auction

48 Acres Block of Land at Rossmore, Co. Laois

Online Auction Friday 4th April 2025 at 2pm via the LSI Platform



- This holding consists of a mixture of arable land, pasture land and forestry.
- It is held under a lease agreement. It is currently in permanent pasture and is suitable for arable.
- It is located on the edge of Rossmore village approx 10 min drive from the N11.
- The land is divided into 3 separate lots:

1. 20.00 Acres Agricultural Land
2. 20.00 Acres Forestry
3. The Estate

The Property will be sold by online auction on the LSI Auction Platform. All intending bidders must register with Hennessy Auctioneers by 1pm on Wednesday 26th March with a holding deposit will need to be paid prior to the sale.

Solicitor for the sale of the land: James E. Cahill & Co Solicitors Ltd
11, Canal Street, Dublin 1, Co. Dublin (Telephone 01 454 2452)

84 Main Street, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
John: 086 23 00221 Olive: 087 9381085
e: hennessyauctioneers@eircom.net
www.hennessyauctioneers.ie
PRSA Licence No. 003609

Dear Miriam: My son is not pulling his weight at home with his young family



Dear Miriam
Agony Aunt

My only son recently got married to a lovely girl and they were lucky enough to welcome their first baby eight months ago. I am besotted with my grandson and help out where I can as I'm retired now. I have a great relationship with my daughter-in-law and I'm very close to my son. The problem is he doesn't seem to lift a finger to help her. She always has his meals on the table, clothes washed, baby

mindful and the household running like clockwork without him doing an ounce to help out. While he works on the family farm with my husband, I still think he needs to give her more support and appreciation. When I tackled him on it recently, he said I was overreacting. How do I get him to see some sense?
I feel my son is taking advantage of his wife and should help out as she looks tired and worn out most of time. Should I talk to her and find out?
— *Annoyed, Co Kerry*

Dear reader,
Thank you for getting in touch. It is great to hear that you have a lovely grandson and new daughter-in-law, who you clearly care about very much.
The first thing I note is that you haven't mentioned whether your daughter-in-law has raised the issue with you. Unless she asks for help, I would tread carefully. Boundaries with in-laws are just like those with any other person in your life.

Saying that, she may not feel comfortable raising issues in her marriage with you – you are after all, her husband's mother.
So, if you feel it is appropriate, I suggest you try to talk to your son again in a calm manner. This time sit down with him and tell him you are worried about your daughter-in-law.
Explain that being a new mother can be a lot of work and mental strain. It's not just about taking care of the baby, but all the other stuff that comes with being a parent that he may be unaware of.
Perhaps, as a start, you could suggest that he offer to give her a night off where she can visit friends or do a class. You could help him – the first few times – if he's not confident about taking care of the baby on his own. You could also offer to give them both a night off so they can talk.
Also encourage your son to sit down with his wife and start talking to find out if she is doing okay and maybe suggest some outside help in the short-term, like someone to come clean the house twice

a week? Or batch cook some meals for them?
You ask whether you should bring this subject up with your daughter-in-law. Well, if you do, be gentle in your approach. It would be good to check-in with her to ensure she is not overwhelmed and offer whatever support and understanding you can.
Motherhood is beautiful but there isn't a new mother on the planet who doesn't need a shoulder to cry on every now and then.
You sound like a wonderful mother-in-law and she is lucky to have you looking out for her.
It's still early days for them as a new family so they'll find their feet in time.

Do you have a problem you would like to share? If so, write in confidence to: Dear Miriam, Agony Aunt, Irish Country Living, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12, or email miriam@farmersjournal.ie

AGRIWORD 1299

COMPILED BY FINÉAGAS

Some clues are cryptic, some more straightforward and some have an agricultural theme

ACROSS

1 & 8d. With a fat pony, fit sirens came around for a check on agricultural prudence. (4,6,10)
6. He only liked India initially for the Hindu festival of colours. (4)
10. Move to music. (5)
11. Some gents redistributed jewels. (9)
12. Fully sated. (7)
15. In what place? (5)
17. The capital city of Latvia. (4)
18. Orient. (4)
19 & 35a. Altar mobs disperse to get cooked meat. (5,4)
21. Cul-de-sac. (4,3)
23. Cox's Pippin, for example. (5)
24. In Africa, it's just the country to leave, it seems. (4)
25. Stitched together. (4)
26. Church recesses made from some scraps, essentially. (5)
28. Farewell. (7)
33. This cocktail tends to give a marine wind! (3,6)
34. Big cats who form a pride. (5)
35. See 19 across.
36. Intruder (who might be prosecuted). (10)

DOWN

1. Lose vividness of colour. (4)
2. Silver medal competitors - with trainers aloft? (7,2)
3. Purloin. (5)
4. Quarrel. (5)
5. Large book. (4)
7. Imperial weight measure. (5)
8. See 1 across.
9. The official will allow the star wed differently. (7)
13. Type of sword used in Olympic fencing. (4)
14. Wearing away what might have been ignored. (7)
16. How one maltreats a bone in the foot. (10)
20. Unnamed. (9)
21. Sweet course of a meal. (7)
22. Military alliance. (1,1,1,1)
27. Group of insects. (5)
29. Unlocks. (5)
30. Triangular river estuary. (5)
31. One fruit that sounds like two. (4)
32. Russian ruler who dispelled rats. (4)

1		2		3		4		5			6	7		8
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							31							32
33											34			
35						36								

HOW TO ENTER

Send completed puzzles to Agriword, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Contact no: _____

Farm enterprise: _____

☐ Tick here if you agree to being contacted with news and offers from Irish Farmers Journal.

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1. **Identify the main topic of the passage.**
 2. **Identify the main purpose of the passage.**
 3. **Identify the main idea of the passage.**
 4. **Identify the main theme of the passage.**
 5. **Identify the main message of the passage.**
 6. **Identify the main conclusion of the passage.**
 7. **Identify the main point of the passage.**
 8. **Identify the main argument of the passage.**
 9. **Identify the main evidence of the passage.**
 10. **Identify the main support of the passage.**
 11. **Identify the main reason of the passage.**
 12. **Identify the main result of the passage.**
 13. **Identify the main effect of the passage.**
 14. **Identify the main impact of the passage.**
 15. **Identify the main outcome of the passage.**
 16. **Identify the main consequence of the passage.**
 17. **Identify the main effect of the passage.**
 18. **Identify the main impact of the passage.**
 19. **Identify the main outcome of the passage.**
 20. **Identify the main consequence of the passage.**

100

Abstract

تاريخ النشر: ٢٠١٨

1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the current situation and what needs to be improved.

100

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 284: 2689-2695.

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 284: 2689-2695.

100

1. **Introduction**
 2. **Background**
 3. **Methodology**
 4. **Results**
 5. **Conclusion**
 6. **References**

Abstract

[illegible][illegible]

1990

[illegible]

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Hyperpigmentation is the darkening of the skin due to an overproduction of melanin. It is a common skin condition that can be caused by a variety of factors, including sun exposure, hormonal changes, and certain medications. There are several treatment options available for hyperpigmentation, including topical creams, chemical peels, and laser therapy. The best treatment option for you will depend on the severity of your condition and your skin type. It is important to consult with a dermatologist to determine the best course of treatment for you.

HOW TO USE

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Police cannot conduct a search of a person's cell phone without a warrant, according to the Supreme Court.

What does he tell us the way we should live?

Abstract

Send Photos/Video/Text/Links to: info@open-belly.com
 Please include Company/Website/Address/Zip/State
 All donations are tax-deductible to the 501(c)(3) Open-Belly

'The sight of those bright yellow ESB vans pulling into the drive was just wonderful'

Katherine O'Leary
Country Life



Tim stuck his head in the kitchen door. Just four magic words, "the ESB are here". Oh, what news! The two yellow vans had been spotted at the end of the drive.

This was Sunday and the website said the electricity wouldn't be repaired until the Wednesday. That would have been long and torturous.

We had lost power on Saturday morning after the storm. I was standing inside the living room window. A fork of lightning flashed in the sky followed by a loud clap of thunder. That was enough,

the power was gone. There followed a few smaller rumbles and a heavy shower of hailstones.

The lads in the farmyard didn't even notice there had been lightning. The small thunderstorm had been powerful and fast. I was about to make tea. All the little daily things we take for granted stopped. We were without power for just 24 hours. We have a generator which is now important for any busy farm, and especially a dairy farm. Still, even that short spell of time was hardship.

The house cooled down and power and water was restricted as Tim moved the generator from the farmyard to the house and back again.

The three men that emerged from the yellow vans were from the Bandon office of the ESB. They had fixed a fault in Vicarstown and then come down to Tower to grab a snack. While there, they had a look at the website to see if there was any other outage nearby and they saw our one logged.

Up they came and had us going in less than an hour. The fault was a fuse that had

been hit by the lightning. They said that the thunder storms were actually causing more problems in our area than storm Éowyn.

We were so grateful to these three men from the ESB. Really, the ESB and other providers have done Trojan work in the last week, working long hours to restore power and water and clear roads of fallen trees in difficult conditions.

Yet, they were upbeat and good humoured while they chatted with Tim and Colm. They did add that they were surprised at how many dairy farmers were without generators.

If these storm events are to continue, then perhaps it is something that needs to be budgeted for. Being ready for a storm goes a long way to making the difficulties of power outage bearable.

Struggling families

It is really tough on parents trying to manage small children with no electricity and water. Carers looking after the elderly and people with additional needs, whether in their own homes or living with family

members had a really difficult time. I have huge sympathy for people who were without services for days, some for over a week. This was definitely an unprecedented situation and hopefully, Ireland will not have a storm as catastrophic for a very long time.

Listening to people in the west of Ireland and across the midlands and north, it is understandable that they felt abandoned as the days went by and they were still without water and electricity. Communities came together, neighbours helped neighbours.

The sheer size of the number of people impacted by this weather event meant that those in remote areas had to just wait it out. That is tough.

Finding a speedier restoration solution is challenging. Building more resilience into the power supply is a priority for the ESB. This will include felling trees that could pull down power lines.

Over time this will lessen the impact of wind damage and hopefully lessen the numbers of people suffering power outages after a storm.

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