

THE SUNDAY TIMES

**Disgraced Andrew was set up with millions**  
News



**2025 Christmas Party Guide**  
Style



**Joanne McNally returns home**  
News



IPAS arson was an attempt to kill, fear gardai

CCTV shows petrol being poured on stairs in Drogheda

**John Mooney**  
Investigations Editor  
**Ruby Hegarty**

The investigation into the arson attack on an accommodation centre for refugees in Drogheda has been upgraded after CCTV showed a masked man breaking into the building before setting it ablaze using petrol.

Gardai are now treating the attack which took place around 8.30pm on Halloween night as potentially attempted murder, reckless endangerment and arson, given the fact that the stairs in the building were set ablaze which would have prevented occupants escaping.

The attack was not carried out by passers-by who threw fireworks through a window as previously thought but was a premeditated act of violence, possibly involving a number of people, which could have resulted in the deaths of women and children.

CCTV footage obtained by The Sunday Times from within the centre showed at least one masked man kicking in a door and pouring what gardai believe was petrol on the stairway before setting it on fire, an act designed to ensure the occupants could not escape.

Gardai believe this act might have occurred as fireworks were thrown through a window elsewhere, possibly to frighten people into running out or upstairs.

Four children, including an infant, were among five people rescued from the top floor of the International Protection Accommodation



A masked man was caught on camera at the asylum centre

tion Services (IPAS) centre situated on George's Street in Drogheda. Some of the occupants were brought to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in the Co Louth town but none had serious injuries. They are being rehomed elsewhere as the authorities review security around other IPAS facilities in Drogheda and the wider region.

The facility itself is used to provide accommodation for 28 people from various countries.

Three fire tenders were called to deal with the fire, which caused minor damage. They remained at the scene for two hours.

Jim O'Callaghan, the justice minister, was last night briefed on the nature of the rapidly evolving investigation by Garda Headquarters.

He was initially told that the fire had been caused by fireworks thrown into the building, putting lives at risk. O'Callaghan described it as a terrifying ordeal for the people

involved and promised there would be serious consequences for those responsible.

The Department of Justice was also informed of the development as violent far-right extremism is now regarded as the most serious security problem facing the state.

The scene at the IPAS centre was yesterday subjected to a technical examination and an incident room has been set up in Drogheda garda station to co-ordinate the hunt for those involved.

Gardai were last night appealing for witnesses to come forward. In addition, they are appealing for people to make contact if they have camera footage from the area at the time.

The incident represents a serious escalation of attacks on accommodation centres used to house refugees, as such violence has previously targeted only empty buildings.

It also follows riots last month outside Citywest Hotel in Saggart after an alleged sexual assault on a ten-year-old girl in the vicinity of the venue, which is being used to house asylum seekers.

Detectives were last night trying to establish whether local criminals might have been involved in the Drogheda attack.

They are said to be following a definite line of inquiry and searching for at least one man who is known to them. They are collecting footage from CCTV cameras in the area and checking garages in an attempt to identify people who may have bought petrol and filled

Continued on page 2➔

FALLEN SOLDIERS



Ardie Savea shrugs off James Lowe to score in New Zealand's 26-13 win over an Ireland who lost Tadhg Beirne to a 20-minute red card after just three minutes at Soldier Field in Chicago, Full story, Sport

DJ Carey raised cash for charity while he conned pals

**John Mooney**  
Investigations Editor  
**Ian Begley**

DJ Carey raised hundreds of thousands of euros for cancer charities while defrauding friends and supporters of about €400,000 by claiming he had the disease.

Gardai suspect his involvement with cancer charities provided cover for his criminal activities.

Detectives describe the former Kilkenny hurler, 54, as a "highly manipulative fraudster" who appears to have deliberately targeted individuals and families affected by cancer, exploiting their empathy and trust to secure large sums of money.

Carey is due to be sentenced tomorrow at the Criminal Courts of Justice in Dublin after admitting to obtaining the money by deception between 2014 and 2022, saying he was suffering from cancer and needed funds for treatment in the United States.

During the same period, he helped to raise more than €600,000 for cancer research through events such as the annual Hurling for Cancer match.

There is no suggestion that any of the charities involved lost money to Carey or were aware of his criminal activities.

Carey is currently being held at Cloverhill Prison, a remand prison, but will be transferred to Mountjoy Jail this week, where he will share a cell with at least three others because of overcrowding. He

Continued on page 2➔



# Taxpayers will foot huge bill for ex-ministers’ underpaid tax

**Ken Foxe**

The taxpayer will be forced to foot the bill for interest and penalties on enormous underpayments of tax owed by former ministers and retired senior civil servants.

Internal government records reveal how “serious and systemic” failures led to the miscalculation of salaries and payments for hundreds of people including ministers, civil servants and retired public service workers.

In some cases, there were massive underpayments of tax from individuals who were retiring with gold-plated pensions.

In such circumstances, the person involved would

normally be hit with both interest and penalties for the unpaid tax.

However, internal records show the government plans to pick up the tab itself and take the money from the budget of the National Shared Services Office (NSSO), which made the mistake.

An internal briefing for Jack Chambers, the minister for public expenditure, said: “As this is an administrative error, there would seem to be no basis for seeking ... any potential penalties from the individuals affected.”

The scale of the miscalculations is laid bare in a series of internal documents that were released under the Freedom

of Information Act by the Department of Public Expenditure.

About 30 top civil servants had underpaid tax on pension lump sums and retirement benefits, in amounts ranging from a few hundred euros to almost €280,000.

A further 1,300 retirement files have had to be examined, dating back as far as 2016, to see if further errors could be found.

There were separate errors involving pension deductions for cabinet members.

Every member of the current government had to have their pay recalculated this summer with amounts owed of between €2,000 and

€30,000. Some are also due refunds because of miscalculations, ranging from just a couple of hundred euros to figures in the low €20,000s.

It is expected that those who owe tax will make arrangements with the NSSO on making repayments.

An internal review found that the payroll system had been incorrectly managing voluntary salary reductions taken by some ministers.

They failed to impose superannuation charges because they treated that income as if it did not count for pension purposes, even though it did.

During that review, officials realised the

“**The briefing said the failures were ‘serious and systematic’**”

problems ran even deeper, potentially affecting thousands of former staff.

A spot check was carried out by Revenue which found some retirees had exceeded a €2 million pension fund threshold but not been charged tax. It said that only ten out of 26 cases had been handled correctly and that €2.39 million in unpaid tax needed to be refunded along with €469,000 in interest.

The bills are likely only to grow as the NSSO tries to untangle the fiasco and as additional cases are notified.

The state is also bracing itself for a large bill from retired civil servants who previously worked part-time or on job-shares. Thousands

could be owed arrears stretching back up to 20 years because their pensions were not calculated correctly.

Some of the cases will be even more complicated, as the person involved has since died, and their estate may be owed money. The briefing said the failures were “serious, systemic and operational” with a full external audit commissioned.

In the documents, officials warned that the state’s payroll system was likely to be put under strain as it tried to resolve the issues.

Asked about the records, a Department of Public Expenditure spokeswoman said all current ministers were now on the appropriate

pension scheme with corrected contributions.

She said that, of the larger pension overpayments, €1.1 million had been paid to Revenue along with €226,000 worth of penalties and interest.

The spokeswoman added that considerable progress had been made in addressing issues around underpayments to potentially 13,000 retirees although it might be that only 20 per cent were directly affected.

She said: “Independent auditors, RSM Ireland, have commenced their audit of the NSSO’s pension and payroll processes. The audit is expected to take up to six months.”

# State pays out over €2bn for consultants

Government racked up the bill with ten firms since 2012 with Revenue, HSE and the gardai paying most

**Patrick O’Donoghue**

More than €2 billion of taxpayers’ money has been paid to just ten consultancy firms over the past 13 years, according to an analysis of government spending by The Sunday Times.

A recently launched database detailing government spending shows 13,741 payments were made by 100 state agencies, government departments and local authorities to the same ten companies.

The government has introduced a budget that provided tax breaks for developers and the hospitality sector but did not ease the tax burden on workers. Beforehand, Paschal Donohoe, the finance minister, said there was a need to “moderate” and “pull down” public spending.

Donohoe and Jack Chambers, the public expenditure minister, have faced criticism over the level of state spending on projects such as the national children’s hospital and the controversial Leinster House bike shed. The ministers could face fresh questions with new figures revealing how spending to the same consultancy firms rocketed from €35 million in 2012 to a record €363 million last year.

Donohoe was a senior minister for the majority of this period while Chambers has been in cabinet for the past five years.

The data is recorded on a public payments and purchase orders tracker developed by Albert Dolan, a Fianna Fail TD for Galway East, and Matthew Fenlon, a former government adviser. The database collects all available information about state payments over the past 13 years.

A total of €2.1 billion was paid by the state in that time, mostly for IT resources, with a sharp rise in fees paid to consultants since the pandemic. The database holds information related to €84 billion of public payments, revealing the largest amount, €2.4 billion, was paid for the provision for Ukrainian accommodation.

Accenture, which specialises in strategy and IT consulting, was the biggest recipient of state money, getting €578 million over the period. The gardai were Accenture’s biggest public sector client, making 492 payments since 2012, amounting to over €250 million. Revenue, the Department of Social Protection and the

“**Fees have increased sharply since the pandemic**”



**Paschal Donohoe has spoken of the need to pull down state spending**

Department of Justice also paid hundreds of millions to Accenture for IT consulting.

Deloitte and EY received €381 million and €369 million respectively. PwC (€137million) and KPMG (€115 million), the other members of the big five consultancy firms, were also in the top ten.

Arup, an engineering consultancy firm, bagged €185 million. Aecom Ireland, a building and infrastructure consultancy, was paid €144 million.

BearingPoint Ireland, a business management consultancy, received a combined €135 million from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Central Bank of Ireland, among others.

Grant Thornton received €58 million in public payments and Vision Consulting, a business management consultancy, was paid €24.5 million.

Revenue paid most to consultants, €352 million since 2012, ahead of the HSE (€316 million) and gardai (€290 million).

Dolan said the data proved a need for a “smarter approach” to how the state sourced expertise. He said he was working “closely” with Chambers on public expenditure since launching the tracker.

“My focus is on improving how we spend, not just how much we spend, so every euro delivers the greatest possible benefit for ... our island,” Dolan said.

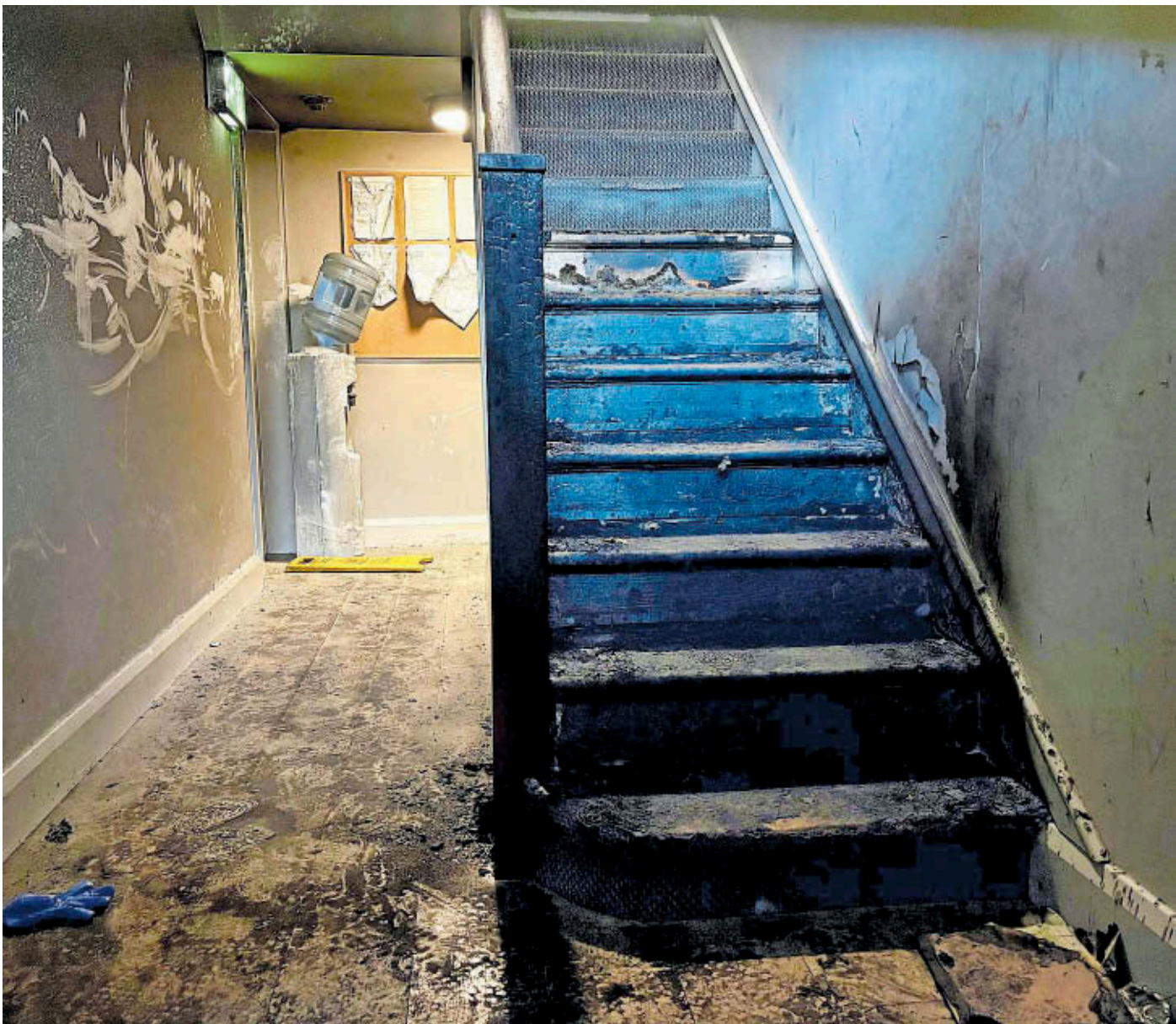
“Strengthening initiatives like the HSE’s ‘one voice for health procurement’ and resourcing central procurement bodies will help ensure the state speaks with one voice, spends wisely and delivers better value for money.”

Most of the ten firms did not respond to requests for comment on the public payments. A BearingPoint spokeswoman said: “For confidentiality reasons, we are unable to comment on any work.”

Deloitte said: “Deloitte is proud of the value and quality of the services provided to clients, and as an employer of over 3,500 people in Ireland we make a valuable contribution to the economy.”

EY declined to comment.

A Department of Public Expenditure official said Chambers would meet Dolan soon to discuss state spending. They added procedures required accounting officers in each department to make value-for-money assessments for costs.



BRYAN MEADE FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES

## Fire attack follows week of debate on ‘high’ immigration

➔ **Continued from page 1**

a container rather than putting fuel in a car. The house itself was not generally known to be an IPAS centre due to the relatively small number of people living there, according to locals.

One Drogheda resident, who did not want to be identified due to the nature of the attack, said there had been no prior indication of any tensions. “I didn’t know that it was an IPAS centre,” she added.

The attack followed a week of debate around comments by Simon Harris, the tanaiste, who said levels of immigration into Ireland had been

**The attack scorched the stairs. Gerry Gannon, below, said the tanaiste had heightened tensions**



“too high”. Harris was also criticised for saying it was taking too long for people to leave the country after being told that they did not have a legal right to stay.

Yesterday Gary Gannon, a Social Democrats TD who likened Harris to the right-wing British politician Nigel Farage last week, said the Fine Gael leader was in no way responsible for the attack on the asylum centre but that what he was “absolutely responsible for is purposefully choosing to lean into the fearmongering that exists in Irish society regarding immigration”.

“It was both reckless and an obvious tactic on his behalf to try win over voters who fear immigration,” Gannon said. “He holds a position of significant leadership in this country and should be ashamed that this is the choice he is

“**I did not know that it was an IPAS centre**”

making. Our immigration system is broken under his watch. If he isn’t willing to be part of a solution that isn’t only about his political career, it might just be better for him to sit this one out.”

Harris’s comments were supported by the taoiseach and Paschal Donohoe, the finance minister. However, senior gardai are understood to be concerned by the rhetoric coming from the government on immigration because of the challenges in policing rising tensions over the issue.

Late yesterday night, the garda press office released a statement saying, while initial reports suggested the fire was started by fireworks, their investigation showed it was “started deliberately by person or persons unknown”.

“This was an extremely dangerous act endangering the lives of the residents, including children, who were in their home at the time,” it said.

## Carey raised money for charity while conning pals

➔ **Continued from page 1**

is likely to be transferred to a less crowded prison or open prison in the coming months depending on his behaviour.

Over the years Carey regularly appeared at high-profile charity events, including the annual Hurling for Cancer match at St Conleth’s Park in Co Kildare, organised by the racehorse trainer Jim Bolger and jockey Davy Russell in aid of the Irish Cancer Society.

In 2012 he was promoted as one of the star attractions at a Hurling for Cancer charity game, where he served as referee and helped to raise more than €120,000 for cancer research.

It was reported at the time to be his first big public appearance since undergoing surgery to remove blood clots.

Following its success, the former hurler continued to

participate in the annual event, which typically raised more than €100,000 a year, until at least 2018.

In 2020, he appeared in a video appeal for a fundraiser supporting cancer patient Veronica “Ronnie” Clancy and the Hurling for Cancer Drive.

The video was posted as rumours of his fraud and deception began to circulate in GAA circles and around Kilkenny.

The success of Carey’s deception was grounded in his sporting fame coupled ability to appeal to the kind nature of his victims, gardai say.

He also approached high net worth individuals including the business tycoon Denis O’Brien, who lent him €125,000 and \$13,000 to help cover non-existent medical expenses.

The full extent of his criminal activities will possibly never be known as many victims approached by gardai refused to make a statement or even lodge formal complaints against him.

**How hurling royalty toppled from the top, page 8**

# Visas and return incentives planned for Ukrainians

**Jennifer Bray**  
Political Editor

Ukrainian refugees will be incentivised to return home once a EU-wide protection order for those fleeing the Russian invasion is lifted under a plan to be discussed by a high-level cabinet committee.

However, the government is also working on proposals to introduce visas for Ukrainians in low-wage jobs in critical sectors of the Irish economy, while those in well-paid employment will be able to acquire residence status.

A senior government source said the coalition was braced for “a huge debate on what we do when the temporary protection directive ends”, with ministers due to discuss a swathe of new measures at a cabinet meeting tomorrow.

A paper prepared for ministers, seen by The Sunday Times, has warned a failure to make adequate plans before the end of the directive – which has been

extended until 2027 but could end sooner if there is a resolution to the conflict – could lead to the international protection system becoming overwhelmed. In Ireland, 120,000 temporary protection orders have been granted to date.

Ministers will be told that ideally, when the EU temporary protection directive ends, Ukrainians “would, in the main, be facilitated to return to Ukraine on a permanent basis” and the supports for those who remain would be “fair, legitimate and appropriate”. This could include providing incentives to help the war refugees return to Ukraine.

The paper says to avoid disruption to the labour market and the housing system, it would be “advantageous” that those who are permitted to remain “are self-sufficient and economically independent”. Ministers will be urged, however, to consider the

economic contribution of those who are filling critical workforce gaps but who might find it harder to get permission to remain.

While some high-wage Ukrainians in full-time jobs may be able to transition to a legal residence status, the majority are in low-paid jobs and in roles not eligible for an employment permit. Ministers will consider tomorrow whether a new visa or residence permission should be introduced for

these low-wage workers. There are nearly 4,000 such workers across the construction, health and social work sectors alone.

More than 4.8 million people have availed of temporary protection across Europe since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ireland has one of the highest per capita temporary protection registrations in western Europe. Ministers will be warned a “lack of planning and implementation of

coherent cross-government arrangements for transition out of temporary protection would give rise to an unmanageable impact on services, particularly in relation to accommodation”.

“A failure to communicate options and to have the appropriate lead-ins or phasing could lead to an overwhelming of the international protection system, leaving the state unable to meet international obligations and potentially cause further legal issues,” the briefing adds. “This could create an additional burden on the state where those currently in employment or in non-state supported accommodation end up dependent on the direct provision system.”

Separate plans are also under way for a further reduction and ultimate wind-down of the accommodation recognition payment scheme, which is a tax-free payment for homeowners who house people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The payment was

cut from €800 to €600 a month earlier this year. The full wind-down of the scheme is expected to begin towards the end of next year. There are over 42,000 Ukrainians living in 23,000 properties which are availing of the accommodation payment.

There are also about 20,500 Ukrainians in state contracted commercial accommodation who were in place before March 2024, and so were not subject to new rules limiting their stay to 90 days.

However, this group will also be targeted, the Sunday Times has learnt. These residents are likely to be given a six to nine-month notification period next year of the eventual withdrawal of their accommodation.

It is understood that further changes to the broader immigration system will lead to asylum seekers in direct provision being charged from €15 to €238 for services and accommodation if they are working under a new means-test plan.



UKRAINE continues to suffer strikes by Russian forces