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'GARDAI MUST INVESTIGATE ST JOHN OF GOD CHIEF'

Finlay and German funders call for probe into abuse cover-up

THE leader of the St John of God order in Ireland should face criminal investigation for the reckless endangerment of children who were abused by a notorious paedophile, internal and external critics believe.

By **Michael O'Farrell**

INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

Speaking to the Irish Mail on Sunday this weekend, former HSE board member Fergus Finlay said this newspa-

per's revelations about a St John of God cover-up that allowed children to be abused in Africa should be criminally investigated.

'Gardaí should be investigating that with

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'Order's Provincial needs to step aside'

From Page One

the view to bringing charges of reckless endangerment,' he said.

Mr Finlay is just one of the growing ranks of critics of the order's response to the revelations in the MoS last weekend.

These include international funders of the order Kindernothilfe (KNH), a senior medical consultant Paul Moran who works for the order, and victims of St John of God Brother Aidan Clohessy.

Together, they have demanded that Donatus Forkan, the Provincial of the St John of God order, resign or be removed from any service provision role pending the outcome of any criminal inquiry.

KNH is one of Europe's largest children's charities and a vital funder to St John of God's operations in Africa. But when the main Irish funder of St John of God (SJoG) – the HSE – was asked for its view on our revelations and Br Forkan's position, they instead directed our questions back to the order.

The MoS last week published harrowing stories of child abuse victims from Malawi who had been abused by serial paedophile Clohessy, who was sent into their midst by Br Forkan in 1993 until his removal from public ministry in 2012.

On June 23 and 24, Clohessy was sentenced to more than five years in prison for the historical abuse of six children at St Augustine's, a school for the intellectually disabled in south Co. Dublin where Clohessy was a teacher and then principal between 1969 and 1993.

Our reporting revealed that while in Malawi, Clohessy continued to abuse as his superiors oversaw secret settlements to victims back home and told the authorities he had no access to children.

Knowingly placing children in danger has been a crime in Ireland since the enactment of the Criminal Justice Act 2006.

By law, a person can be prosecuted for recklessly endangering a child by causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse.

Mr Finlay – a former CEO of children's charity, Barnardos – said that, in his experience of the St John of God order, 'money matters to them almost more than anything else.'

He called on Br Forkan to step down immediately from any role involving services to vulnerable children and adults.

As Provincial of his order, Br Forkan remains a long-standing board member of the St John of God Hospital Services Group. This entity is a parent company to St John of God Community Services, a charity for intellectually disabled children and adults, funded entirely by the HSE to the tune of hundreds of millions annually.

Mr Finlay told the MoS: 'I strongly believe – strongly believe – that he should step down or step aside from or be removed from every position of authority in relation to the provision of services.'

'What the order does is entirely a matter for the order, as far as I'm concerned, but the service provision end of it, the publicly funded companies that are involved in providing services, he should not be a



HARROWING: Last week's MoS stories of abuse victims in Malawi



director of those under any circumstances.'

However, as of last night, both the board of the St John of God Hospital Services Group and the HSE were refusing to address the issue. When asked about Br Forkan's position, the HSE said we should redirect our questions to St

'Forkan's role needs to be investigated'

John of God itself. St John of God, meanwhile, had no comment to make about Br Forkan's position.

This silence is in stark contrast to the willingness of international funders and senior medical staff within the St John of God group to speak up – even at some risk to themselves.

Paul Moran, a consultant psychiatrist employed by St John of God, told the MoS: 'I am aware that in coming forward, I may be putting myself at risk, professionally, but in light of the inadequate response from the organisation, I feel I must speak out and ask questions.'

'I am anxious not to scare current service users and want to reassure them that the service safeguards are better now than they were, but we have a situation where, in the shadows, we have this order which sits above the management of these services and has power and control and is basically under the

direction of one of the main guys who allowed this to happen.

'So, while the service is committed to protecting people, the people they report to have a record of not doing so, and that raises a question as to who is in a position to guarantee that the required standards are met.'

Mr Moran questioned whether Br Forkan should be allowed to have a role in governing services.

'In light of what has been revealed and what has been proven in court, his role needs to be investigated. And until such time as these investigations are concluded should he be allowed an active role in governing services for vulnerable people?'

Mr Moran also criticised the manner in which the St John of God order had spent millions on private settlements with Clohessy's victims in Malawi and Ireland. He said the order 'appears more committed to looking after the interest and reputation of the order ahead of everything else, including the rights and safety of victims'. He added: 'Paying off of victims to prevent court cases happening is not consistent with any of the policies or safeguarding guidelines, or the stated values of the order.'

One of the order's main international funders – German children's charity KNH – last night welcomed Clohessy's prosecution. 'It is crucial that cases of sexual abuse are consistently pursued through legal channels and that perpetrators are held accountable, regardless of when or where the offences were committed,' a spokesperson said. 'Our deepest sympathies go out to the victims. Their voices deserve to be heard, justice must be served, and their protection ensured. Pro-



ROME 2006 GREETING: Br Donatus Forkan meets Pope Benedict



DUBLIN 2010 ALL SMILES: Br Donatus, left, with other clerics celebrating with a cake and, below, with notorious paedophile Clohessy, centre



MALAWI 2010

tecting children must always be the highest priority in any society and institution.'

KNH also called for Br Forkan to be investigated for recklessly endangering children.

'With regard to Brother Donatus, it is in our view now urgent that an independent and transparent review of all related events be conducted,' a KNH spokesperson told the MoS. 'We think an independent

investigation into Donatus Forkan's role in sending and tolerating Brother Aidan's presence in Malawi is a necessary step after the court ruling. This is essential not only to clarify responsibility but also to draw structural consequences and improve systems for child protection,' the charity said. KNH added: 'Religious institutions, like all other institutions, must never evade responsibility or



WARNED: Br Donatus Forkan, from Kinaffe in Co. Mayo

DUBLIN 2016

'As Prior General, he was responsible for the order's response to abuse'

WILLIAM Forkan is a farmer's son from Kinaffe, just outside Swinford in Co. Mayo, who entered the St John of God order in 1960. From then on, he became known as Br Donatus Forkan. On the very same day another man, James Clohessy – an engineer's son from Limerick – was also professed. He became known as Br Aidan Clohessy.

Br Forkan spent 21 years as a missionary in Korea before returning home to become Provincial in Ireland in 1992. The following year, he dispatched Br Aidan to Malawi.

In advance of his departure to Africa, Br Forkan presented his alumnus with a small bronze statue of St John of God.

The date was October 22, 1993 – the official start of Br Aidan's new mission. At that point, Clohessy had already been accused of abuse once.

Those accusations would soon mount up substantially.

Despite this, Br Forkan left Clohessy in Africa as victims here were paid off in secret.

At home, meanwhile, Br Forkan's career took off. In 1994, he moved to Rome as one of the five most senior members of the St John of God order globally.

In 2006, he became Prior General, the order's worldwide leader.

By Michael O'Farrell

INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

At this point, the number of allegations against Clohessy had exceeded a dozen – yet he remained free to prey on others in Malawi. As Prior General, Br Forkan was responsible for shaping the order's response to child abuse.

Clohessy wasn't his only problem.

In 2007, a safeguarding consultant hired to help St John of God deal with a tide of abuse allegations in Australia and New Zealand, wrote to him in Rome.

Dr Michelle Mulvihill, a psychologist and former Sister of Mercy nun complained: 'Regretfully it has been my experience that when I have tried

'A deeply engrained culture of collusion'

raise matters of a challenging or unpleasant nature, the consistent response has been one of rejection and vilification of a personal nature.'

She also warned Br Forkan of a 'deeply engrained culture of collusion' within his order. This, she told him, 'makes it almost impossible for the truth about these matters to be dealt with'.

Ultimately, Dr Mulvihill resigned in protest. She later went on to testify about her

dealings with St John of God and Br Forkan at the Australian Commission into clerical child abuse.

Dr Mulvihill told the Commission that she resigned because she 'could no longer deal with the corruption and systemic abuse that was my experience of what was happening inside that organisation'.

She added: 'It's all about power, isn't it? All roads lead to Rome. It's all about who's in charge.'

Dr Mulvihill was not alone in warning Br Forkan about child abuse concerns.

The Irish Mail on Sunday has also obtained a 2007 letter to Br Forkan from Australian Bishop Michael Malone.

Bishop Malone was particularly concerned that the Australian Province of St John of God had elected a new leader and council, which included some members who had been the subject of abuse complaints.

'I understand that you were present for the Chapter and election,' he wrote to Br Forkan in Rome.

'Something serious needs to be done to address the matters which have been reported to me.'

'I am confident that you will share my concern and attend to what has the potential to become already greater scandal than already exists.'

Ultimately, with the backing of Br Forkan in Rome, the order in Australia paid millions in compensation and legal fees to protect accused brothers who would later be jailed.

The MoS has previously asked Br Forkan about his role in Australia, but he has never responded.

'Organisations who are providing services to children have a statutory responsibility under the Children First Act 2015 to keep children safe from harm while availing of those services, carry

'Seek support and talk with the authorities'

out a risk assessment, prepare and publish a Child Safeguarding Statement and to refer any concern regarding a child to Tusla.

'When Tusla suspects that a crime has been committed, and a child or children have been wilfully neglected or physically or sexually

abused, Tusla notifies An Garda Síochána where they investigate the crime.'

The MoS also contacted the Department of Health, whose spokesperson advised that the Department of Children should be contacted for comment. However, that department did not respond.

A spokesperson for the Association of Leaders of Missionaries & Religious of Ireland declined to comment last night – but confirmed that the matter would be referred to the next meeting of the executive.

Last week, the SJoG order refused to comment on its role in the cover-up of Clohessy's crimes in Ireland and Africa.

Instead, Br Forkan posted a brief

statement on the St John of God website. He said in the statement: 'I apologise to anyone who has experienced hurt in our services in the past.'

'As a community, we unequivocally condemn any action that harms or diminishes others.'

'These recent times have reflected pain for so many and brought emotional turmoil for all affected. We think especially of those who came forward to report hurt that they had experienced, we acknowledge their bravery and courage and we think of their families and loved ones.'

This week, a spokesperson for St John of God declined to specifically address queries about the role of Br Forkan.

'The order encourages anyone who has experienced hurt to seek support and talk with the authorities,' he said, before providing abuse helpline phone numbers.

michaelofarrell@protonmail.com

BEHIND THE LIES Pages 30 & 31

Beneath the lies and abuse, lay the truth

IT STARTED with an investigation into €1.6m of secret pay top ups for Saint John of God executives in 2016. That investigation led this newspaper to question in 2017, why the order had given false evidence to the Ryan Commission about when they received their first allegation of sexual abuse. In response, a legal threat in the face of incontrovertible facts hinted at something more. What that something was would take a further eight years to fully bring out to the light, and convict a serial paedophile who the order had spent years and millions of euro trying to cover up. Br Aidan Clohessey's abuse spanned decades and continents. Here the journalist, whose dogged pursuit finally revealed the pain and damage Clohessey inflicted on his silenced victims, relates his part in the almost decade-long journey to justice.

BROTHER Donatus Forkan has a story he likes to tell. It involves an encounter he once had with an impoverished street girl in Mexico who was shunned by others. Feeling sorry for her, he intervened and bought the sweets she was selling. Ever since, he has kept them on his desk as a reminder that many children are denied the 'dignity that every human being is entitled to'. I too have a moment like that. It is a simple bracelet, made by a homeless addict from Malawi called John Simwawa. He made the bracelet by stripping wires from scrapped cars and wrapping the copper around itself to form a wristband.

John is dead now. But his legacy lives on. He is one of several people without whom this story could never have been told. So when Br Aidan's trials began in May, I slipped on John's bracelet and wore it throughout.

When photographer Sean Dwyer and I first travelled to Malawi in 2017 to track down Br Aidan's victims there, John was the key who unlocked everything else.

As an orphaned street child, he had been one of those Br Aidan routinely collected in his pickup truck by the People's cafe.

He'd then bring them home to bathe and beat – and worse.

Strung out as he was when I met him, John was still able to lead me to others who had been taken from the streets by Br Aidan.

It was a similar role to the one that another person vital to this story, Con Carroll, performed in Ireland.

Long before I went to Malawi, I had to prove the St John of God order knew Br Aidan was a danger to children before they sent him to Africa.

That meant finding victims here, something that was only possible because of Con.

From 2003, the Redress Board had begun compensating those abused at St Augustine's. But that process was entirely behind closed doors. Even today it remains a crime for anyone to breach this seal.

Think about that for a moment. It goes to the heart of how St John of God was able to cover up

By Michael O'Farrell

INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

the crimes of a serial paedophile, allowing him to continue abusing.

In fact, it is likely that for many victims, they did succeed in wiping the abuse they suffered from history. We don't know how many claims were secretly settled at the Redress Board – because St John of God won't tell us.

All we can trace is how the order inserted itself into the redress system at the very last moment, just as it was being passed by the Dáil. That was achieved thanks to secret, backroom negotiations

'For €1m, Br Aidan got a free pass to abuse kids'

conducted by the powerful Church and political figures St John of God was able to marshal in the order's favour.

What this all means is that in return for a contribution of €1m to the Redress Board by his order, Br Aidan got a free pass to continue abusing kids.

Later in 2004, his order was able to mislead the Ryan Commission into clerical abuse. In fact, they made out that child abuse was not an issue for them at all.

At the time of his commission testimony, Br Fintan Whitmore made no apology – saying he had checked the files and could find no evidence or proof that any abuse had occurred at St John of God institutions.

Asked by the Commission why they had contributed to the redress fund, if this was the case, the answer was telling.

And how it mattered. From the moment I began to find them and Br Aidan's victims



'It was an attractive proposition,' then Irish provincial Br Whitmore answered.

The misleading Ryan Commission testimony of Br Whitmore was the first article this newspaper published in this strand of our investigations into SJoG - as the order became known in our newsroom shorthand.

They tried to stop it, threatening a High Court defamation case. The threat might have worked because at the time we were not aware of the scale of this story, and were still largely focused on the €1.6m in secret top ups to their executives who ran their services for the HSE.

We had not yet identified Br Aidan, or the fact that he'd been recklessly sent to Africa while his order covered up his crimes here. We simply knew the Commission had been misled. And because we are trained to, we wondered why?

It was the legal threat that told us the why mattered.

And how it mattered. From the moment I began to find them and Br Aidan's victims

VICTIM: John Simwawa in Mzuzu, Malawi

began trusting me with their stories, I knew this was going to be a life-altering assignment.

I knew that if I never got any other story over the line but this one, I'd look back at my career as a journalist with satisfaction.

Each and every one of those abused by Br Aidan – here and in Malawi – were instantly and utterly credible.

I knew they were telling nothing but the truth. Grown men have nothing to gain by telling a stranger how they still wet the bed and cannot have adult relationships because of what was done to them as a child.

The tears that silently roll down their cheeks as they do so do not lie.

So I knew that if any jury ever heard these people, they too would believe them. No doubt about it.

The further we went the more this became apparent. Victims who never met, on different sides of the world, spoke of the same sinister pattern, the same sick modus operandi.

Every new victim traced gave yet further corroboration that we were dealing with a prolific paedophile who'd been systematically enabled by his superiors.

The challenge was to get as far as a jury at all. All the odds were stacked against it.

But those intent on keeping secrets didn't bargain on Con

Carroll – and the enduring presence of obscure internet chat rooms.

Because he was an orphan, Con had been sent to St Augustine's and into the preying hands of Br Aidan.

When he left he became a homeless heroin addict haunting the streets of Dublin. But he somehow pulled through and survived.

Then in September 2005 Con walked into the Five Star Internet Cafe on Dublin's Talbot Street and

'An orphan, Con was sent to St Augustine's'

paid for an hour online. The words he typed out that day with a single finger on his one good hand are online still.

'Aidan Clohessey was involved in child sex abuse,' he wrote, misspelling his tormentor's name. By then Con had been before the Redress Board. Were he to ever say what happened there, he could be prosecuted as a criminal. But he wasn't afraid to speak up about what Br Aidan did to him.

In fact, he wanted the world to know. Over a decade after he left those words online, I stumbled across them.

Soon Con was leading me to

others across Dublin who had been victims. Con Carroll was the first real breakthrough in this case.

Because of him – and those he led us to – we discovered the abuse of boys at St Augustine's had been covered up in Ireland.

Then, thousands of miles away in Malawi, John Simwawa played the same role. Through him, we learned Br Aidan had continued to abuse.

We knew all this by late 2017 and that Christmas I confronted Br Aidan in person back in Dublin. He was completely unfazed.

Listening to him I never felt like I was listening to an innocent man. Instead, he sounded every inch a monster who knew he'd gotten away with it.

Perhaps he was right not to be worried. The odds were still stacked firmly in his favour and against those whose lives he had destroyed.

But we had enough to publish and we did.

Although our 2018 coverage was primarily about the cover up that allowed Br Aidan to remain with children in Africa, we were effectively naming a man as an alleged paedophile, which is not without considerable risk.

But naming and picturing him proved to be the next breakthrough. As part of that story, we put Br Aidan's photo on the front page.

Other victims, some who could

not read or write, saw the photograph – something that would not have worked if it had appeared in an anonymised form or without a photo.

When they came to us we listened to, and published their stories. We then directed them to gardai as a new criminal investigation of Br Aidan was launched.

Then, with matters in the hands of gardai and the DPP, we watched and waited. And worked on other stories.

For his part, Br Aidan lawyered up and received the best advice money could buy. When asked, he voluntarily attended several interviews under caution with investigating gardai.

This allowed his defence to later tell juries that their client cooperated fully and had never been arrested.

That defence was funded privately and St John of God had refused to specify if they paid.

(The order did, though, pay for a barrister to keep a watching brief on his trials – something that costs about €750 a day or €15,000 every 20 days.)

Whoever paid for his defence, Br Aidan got value for money immediately.

That was evident when he appeared before Dun Laoighairne District Court to be formally charged in February 2022. This was the first step on the formal road to justice for his victims after decades. Finally, they could feel someone had believed them.

But Br Aidan's defence secured a gagging order, preventing the press from reporting any of the charges against their client.

This reporting restriction was only lifted six months afterwards when we joined forces with other media organisations – including RTE, The Irish Independent, News International and The Irish Times – to defeat it.

And still some victims were left

behind. Like others, Wayne Farrell had seen our 2018 coverage and had reported his abuse to his local garda station a few days later.

He was ignored. No one ever got back to him. That was only put right after Br Aidan had been charged when I directed him to the correct garda team.

He was then added to a second case and soon Br Aidan was charged with abusing Wayne and another victim.

Ultimately, Br Aidan did not go on trial until May 2025 – eight years after we'd first exposed him. The State wanted to run all the victims' cases together in one trial, something that would have led to a

great deal of corroborating evidence. But the defence wanted six separate trials, meaning every jury would be unaware there were any more complaints.

After legal argument, two trials were ordered, one for four victims and one for two. By then St John of God had spent millions in Ireland and Africa settling civil actions – of which the juries knew nothing. In Africa, those who came forward were targeted, threatened and offered cash to drop their claims – something St John God condemned when we brought it to their attention.

Br Aidan then pleaded not guilty, forcing each and every victim to testify against him.

This tactic put one of the trials in jeopardy when one victim, Joe Devine, had a panic attack on the stand – and was taken away by ambulance. Had he not returned several days later, that trial would have collapsed. But none of that could be reported at the time.

That's because a new law designed to protect rape victims meant the trials were held in camera – even though the majority of Br Aidan's victims wanted their story heard publicly. Instead, as the trial and sentencing process continued for the best part of two



EXCLUSIVE: The Irish Mail on Sunday's report on Br Aidan's abuse of children in Malawi, Africa

months, the public were prevented from hearing them tell their story. Then, for those victims involved in the first trial there was one final blow. In his first trial, Br Aidan was convicted and branded an ogre by the trial judge, Elva Duffy.

She moved to imprison him immediately, pending the second trial and sentencing. However, Br Aidan's defence intervened, arguing this would delay the second trial.

So instead of being lead away in cuffs, something victims had waited decades for, he walked out the front door even though he was a guilty man.

I know, from speaking to them that night, that this traumatised them afresh. To them it felt as if the system had let them down again. Thankfully, this was a temporary glitch, albeit a cruel one.

As I write this today, and as you might have read last week in this newspaper, Br Aidan is in jail and the cover up facilitated by his order has been exposed.

While I am proud of our part to play in that what matters most is children – who became men – who were never believed, have finally been granted that relief.

'They finally believed us,' one victim, not connected to the trial, called me to say afterwards.

He sounded astonished that it could be so.

And given how long it took, and how many twists and turns threatened to prove his doubts correct, maybe he was right to be.

But somehow, I always knew that would be the case. The challenge was getting them heard. That's where the journalism was.

I have a name for this kind of work. I call it 'slow news'. It relies on resources of news organisations, and the expertise (and instincts) of reporters and photographers, and the patience (and instincts) of editors, and the collective belief in the end result, despite whatever setback might make you question the time and effort being funnelled into one story.

Oh and people. Like John Simwawa and Con Carroll. Who fought their demons and proved that no matter what a monster like Br Aidan Clohessey can take away, a sense of shared humanity, and a belief in a fundamental justice, can triumph over the even hugely powerful organisations like SJoG.

And the secrets they still cling to. michaelofarrell@protonmail.com

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A tale of two responses and radically different attitudes to governance

THIS week we follow up last week's shocking revelations about St John Of God (SJoG) by contacting two separate organisations who fund the charity; the first the HSE who support it here, the second the German outfit Kindernothilfe (KNH) who fund SJoG in Malawi.

The difference in the two responses is striking. The HSE response is to refer us back to those whose actions helped facilitate a cover-up of sexual abuse so they can answer questions about whether they should face investigation.

The German response strikes at the heart of the matter. They assert in a straightforward fashion that Br Donatus Forkan's role in sending Aidan Clohessy to Malawi must be investigated independently and include four points encapsulating the ethical issues in a clear and concise manner.

There is no obfuscation, no qualification. This sorry but not surprising tale of two responses reveals radically dif-

ferent cultural approaches to governance and safeguarding in Ireland and abroad.

The HSE tells us that it doesn't think it appropriate to respond to significant questions. To make things worse, when we contacted the Department of Health on the issue, they said it was a matter for the Department of Children. The Department of Children then simply didn't respond. A cover-up of child sex abuse is not important enough apparently for the spokespeople of elected ministers to have an opinion on. In the face of this absurdity,

we were forced to remind ourselves that this is not the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s when this abuse occurred. It is also not the 1990s when the tectonic plates shifted as the child sex abuse scandals were unveiled and a level of circumspection in public was inevitable.

We are in the post-State apology era. We've had the Ryan report, the Murphy commission. We have seen the once-mighty pillar of Irish society, that the Church once was, decimated by the cowardice of their response to evil within their ranks. We have seen too many Church

leaders choose cover-up over Christ and lose the moral authority they once owned as a birthright.

As such, no politician, civil or public servant should be under any illusion about children being sacrificed to protect institutions of Church or State.

Yet still the HSE and the relevant ministers observe the same omerta as those who left African children to be abused by a serial paedophile.

The Germans in contrast offer sympathy to victims and condemn the crime of child sex abuse, something SJoG could

have done last week but didn't.

They also stress the importance of avoiding a cover-up in investigating Br Forkan's role. The German response is a damning indictment of how we continually conduct business in this country.

Meanwhile, Br Forkan, Irish Provincial of SJoG, sends letters internally apologising for the hurt caused – again that's something that he could have said to this newspaper last week, but didn't.

It falls instead to respected disability campaigner Fergus Finlay and a SJoG psychotherapist, breaking ranks, to argue the obvious. Br Forkan should step aside while an investigation is launched. That should happen today. Politicians elected to represent the public good should be insisting on this.

The HSE should be issuing statements on the issue, rather than waiting until they are asked about it – only to avoid them. And editorials like this should not have to be written.

Ireland's risk of outages should spark questions about how we ended up here

IN TRUTH, I'm more disappointed than surprised that EirGrid once again finds itself presiding over a period of heightened risk to Ireland's electricity system. The latest ENTSO-E Summer Outlook – an authoritative forecast by Europe's grid operators – warns that Ireland is one of just three countries in Europe facing 'adequacy concerns' this summer, due in part to multiple planned outages.

Perhaps even more worryingly, the report also points to a 'lack of new dispatchable generation [electricity that can be programmed on demand] entering the market to replace old units that have closed and to cover the increase in demand'.

To be singled out at European level – something that has, unfortunately, been remarked upon to me by colleagues in the European Parliament – is more than just an embarrassment. It should spark serious reflection on how we ended up here. EirGrid's response, framing this latest warning as a 'low risk' scenario, is obfuscation and does little to detract from the core issue: we are exposed again, and we shouldn't be.

What makes this all the more troubling is the timing. The risk period identified follows a €1.3bn spend on so-called Temporary Emergency Generation – diesel-fired plants intended to provide urgent back-up – which, on any reasonable reading, should have reduced the need for alarm.

That programme, initially projected at €600m, quietly doubled in cost with minimal public scrutiny and has yet to deliver the reliability it was meant to.

The fact that Ireland is still being flagged for possible shortfalls – even after this unprecedented emergency spend – should raise questions at the highest level. As should the fact that certain State bodies, including the ESB, were permitted to bypass planning rules under emergency legislation and still failed to deliver timely capacity.

This is not the result of some sudden crisis. It's the product of drift, poor planning and repeated failure to act on clear warnings –

failures I've raised consistently in Dáil Éireann, the European Parliament and both institutions' relevant committees.

EirGrid's own former chief even warned we were 'sleepwalking into a capacity crisis'. That warning is quickly becoming reality. Flexibility in the system is limited. Dispatchable generation is not arriving quickly enough. And the grid simply can't keep up.

What's worse is that, while grid operators highlight variability in wind and outages in existing

plants, they continue to delay or block the very private-sector projects that could help.

DEVELOPERS offering battery storage, fast-acting gas peakers or private wire renewables are tied up in a maze of delays, shifting criteria and a connection process that too often seems built to protect incumbents, not enable progress.

Nowhere is this dysfunction

more visible than in the capacity auction system. Overseen by the Single Electricity Market (SEM) Committee – made up of Ireland's Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and Northern Ireland's Utility Regulator – the system was intended to ensure enough future electricity generation.

In practice, it hasn't. Instead of promoting competition and enabling new projects, it has become opaque, inconsistent and structurally flawed.

Contracts are effectively pre-awarded and qualification rules changed without notice.

Locational criteria are used to block credible bids without explanation. A recent High Court judgment has only confirmed what

many in the sector have said for years; the system is broken. The ENTSO-E report also lands alongside another damning figure.

New data from Aurora Energy Research shows that €450m worth of wind energy was wasted last year due to grid constraints. This is the result of EirGrid having to consistently instruct wind farms to reduce or shut off supply because the grid cannot absorb the power.

If we're serious about restoring investor confidence, protecting consumers and businesses, and delivering energy security, we need to get back to fundamentals. That means fair and transparent access to the grid. It means full accountability on emergency generation costs and outcomes.

IT MEANS fixing capacity auctions so they deliver real generation, not incumbency bias. And it means cutting through the bureaucratic roadblocks that continue to stall progress, particularly when it comes to realising the to date unlocked potential of renewable generation, including offshore wind.

It should not be forgotten, amid all of this, that the most dangerous aspect about the current situation isn't actually the temporary shortfall flagged for September – it's the deeper inertia that has allowed these issues to build over years.

A flawed system has been left to drift, pushing up costs, freezing out innovation and exposing the public to unnecessary risk.

I have been warning for years that without reform, leadership and accountability, this moment would arrive. Now it has.

If the energy transition we all want to see is to be achieved, we need institutions that drive progress – not ones that stand in its way. It's time to restore trust, rethink how we deliver and rebuild a system that cannot afford another wasted year.



By **BARRY COWAN**

FIANNA FÁIL MIDLANDS NORTH-WEST MEP

Minister for Education launches inquiry into historical sexual abuse but asked Deafening official

By **John Lee** and **Michael O'Farrell**

THE Minister for Education last night remained tight-lipped over suggestions the head of St John of God in Ireland should not be allowed to be in charge of an organisation with credible allegations of reckless endangerment of children levelled against him.

Minister Helen McEntee this week announced a commission of investigation, to be headed by Judge Michael MacGrath, after a September 2024 scoping inquiry report revealed thousands of allegations of historical abuse in schools.

At a press conference after confirming the establishment of the commission, she said the religious groups involved in historical sexual abuse 'will be held accountable'.

The MoS understands that now-convicted St John of God (SJoG) paedophile Br Aidan Clohessy is one of the 29 abusers in a SJoG special needs school in Blackrock, St Augustine's, where the 2024 scoping report confirmed 112 allegations.

Two weeks ago the Irish Mail on Sunday reported lifelong predatory paedophile Clohessy was left free to prey

Called for a Garda investigation

on children in Africa as SJoG superiors covered up his crimes in Ireland.

Last week we reported comments by former HSE board member Fergus Finlay, SJoG consultant psychiatrist Dr Paul Moran, and the German NGO Kindernothilfe (the funder of some of SJoG's programmes in Malawi in Africa). They called for a Garda investigation into potential reckless endangerment under the 2006 Criminal Justice Act for Br Donatus Forkan's role in covering up the crimes of Clohessy, and the need for Br Forkan to step aside while that investigation is pursued.

But despite our reporting being directly relevant not just to the commission of investigation but to a current child protection concern over an organisation that receives over €200m in public funding, the Department of Education joins the Department of Children, the Department of Health and the HSE in refusing to comment on SJoG or not directly addressing the questions put to them.

Asked directly about the criticisms from Mr Finlay, Dr Moran and the German NGO – whose statement is reproduced in full on the opposite page – a spokesman for the minister told the MoS: 'The Department of Education and Youth does not comment on individual cases.'

'The sexual abuse of a child is a criminal act that is repugnant to the whole community. It is the role of An Garda Síochána to determine if a criminal act has been committed and if an investigation is required.'

john.lee@mailonsunday.ie

By **John Lee** and **Michael O'Farrell**

THE Irish Mail on Sunday reported that critics wanted St John of God chief Br Donatus Forkan to be investigated for alleged reckless endangerment of children under Irish law after the organisation left now-convicted paedophile Br Aidan Clohessy in Malawi, in complete control of all of their services.

Internal and external critics called for Br Forkan to step aside from any role with oversight of service provision while an investigation takes place into why Clohessy was left in situ, providing services to street children, despite mounting allegations against him, and the settlement of cases in Ireland and Africa on his behalf.

Those critics include former HSE board member and ex-Barnardos CEO Fergus Finlay, a St John of God (SJoG) consultant psychiatrist Paul Moran, and Kindernothilfe, the German funders of some of SJoG's programmes in Malawi.

In the past two weeks we have contacted various relevant Irish authorities for their views on the conviction of Clohessy and the alleged reckless endangerment by Br Forkan of street children in Africa and whether he should step aside from any role in service provision given his non-action regarding mounting child abuse allegations.

The following is a description of official Ireland's response to these very serious matters.

JUNE 29
'OGRE' BROTHER ABUSED STREET KIDS IN AFRICA

WE report that lifelong predatory paedophile Clohessy was left free to prey on children in Africa as his St John of God superiors covered up his crimes in Ireland. A SJoG spokesman said 'no comment' when asked about the story. In the subsequent week, we contacted the HSE, Tusla, the departments of Health and Children, and the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI). Here are their individual responses:

HSE (the main Irish funder of SJoG's Irish operations): A spokeswoman tells us: 'You should redirect your query to the board of St John of God Hospitaller Services Group.'

Two weeks of asking our politicians questions that they won't answer

TUSLA: A spokeswoman says: 'Tusla – Child and Family Agency does not comment on individual cases.'

'When a child or family enters into a relationship with a public service such as Tusla, they are entitled to expect that information generated in that relationship is treated in confidence and remains private. This is critically important in the subject matters [in] which Tusla is involved.'

'Organisations who are providing services to children have a statutory responsibility under the Children First Act 2015 to keep children safe from harm while availing of those services, carry out a risk assessment, prepare and publish a Child Safeguarding Statement and to refer any concern regarding a child to Tusla.'

In line with our primary legislative duty, when a person comes forward and makes an allegation about something that they experienced in childhood, Tusla's role is focused on the safeguarding of children who may be at risk today or in the future due to abuse that is reported to have occurred in the past.

'When Tusla suspects that a crime has been committed, and a child or children have been willfully neglected or physically or sexually abused, Tusla notifies An Garda Síochána, where they investigate the crime.'

'Anyone who wishes to disclose details relating to retrospective abuse can contact their local duty social work office. Contact details are available at tusla.ie/get-in-touch/duty-social-work-teams.

'We are absolutely mindful of the trauma and emotional distress experienced by many

people in this particular context of our work, and this informs our approach to the greatest extent possible.'

HEALTH: A spokeswoman says: 'This is not our remit, it is a matter for Department of Children. We have forwarded your queries to them.'

CHILDREN: No response was received.

AMRI: 'I'll refer this to the executive of AMRI.'

JULY 6
'GARDAI MUST INVESTIGATE ST JOHN OF GOD CHIEF'

WE report comments by Fergus Finlay, Dr Paul Moran and the German NGO Kindernothilfe, calling for a Garda investigation into Br Donatus Forkan's role in covering up the crimes of Clohessy and the need for him to step aside while that investigation is pursued. SJoG's only response is to direct us to abuse freephone helplines.

On Tuesday, July 8, Education Minister Helen McEntee announces the establishment of a Commission of Investigation, to be chaired by Judge Michael MacGrath, into historical abuse in schools.

This week we decided to follow up our previous contact with the departments of Health and Children; and to contact the Department of Education, given that Clohessy

was convicted of abuse in St Augustine's School, Blackrock, Co. Dublin. The scoping inquiry that forms the basis for the announced commission confirmed 112 allegations involving 29 alleged abusers at that school. Crucially, one of those abusers was Clohessy. Here are their individual responses:

CHILDREN: The MoS queried last week's non-response to be told it was due to an administrative error, but the response would have been that the issue was not in the department's 'remit'. We suggested, strongly, that such a response was not acceptable in that it would mean that two Government departments would be rejecting jurisdiction over issues of child protection and documented child abuse. We contacted the Government Press Secretary to advise him of this concern, and asked the department to revert with a more substantive response.

A spokesman responded: 'While the Department of Children, Disability and Equality cannot comment on individual cases, it takes matters of child protection extremely seriously. Tusla and An Garda Síochána are the two agencies in the State with statutory responsibility for assessing (Tusla) and investigating (An Garda Síochána) allegations of child abuse and promoting the safety and welfare of children. These agencies carry out their responsibilities under a suite of child protection legislation including the Children First Act, 2015, Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016.'

Organisations who are providing services to children have a statutory responsibility under the Children First Act



PROLIFIC PAEDOPHILE: Brother Aidan Clohessy leaving court in May

if current head of Irish order who ‘covered up’ abuse should be left in charge: silence descends



HELEN MCENTEE
The Education Minister talks tough on historical sex abuse but had no opinion on whether the current SJoG head should step aside

JENNIFER CARROLL MACNEILL
The Health Minister's office said 'this is not our remit'

NORMA FOLEY
The Children's Minister's office told the MoS child sex abuse was 'not in its remit' and told us to contact Tusla and An Garda Síochána

BERNARD GLOSTER
The HSE had no comment other than to tell us to redirect our query to St John of God Hospitaller Group

2015 to keep children safe from harm while availing of those services, carry out a risk assessment, prepare and publish a Child Safeguarding Statement and to refer any concerns regarding a child to Tusla. When Tusla suspects that a crime has been committed, and a child or children have been wilfully neglected or physically or sexually abused, Tusla notifies An Garda Síochána where they investigate the crime.'

Crucially the statement does not answer whether they believe Brother Forkan should step or be moved aside from his role in SJoG.

HEALTH: We also reverted to the Department of Health. Despite the issue not being in its remit last week, the involvement of the Government Press Secretary apparently affects its answer. Asked if there should be a Garda investigation, a spokeswoman says: 'Anyone with information should

contact relevant authorities.' The statement does not answer whether the department believes Br Forkan should step aside or be moved from his role in SJoG.

EDUCATION: Launching the Commission of Investigation, based on the scoping inquiry published in September 2008, Education Minister Helen McEntee says:

'The revelations of the report of the scoping inquiry were devastating, and the survivors' accounts of their experiences have had a profound impact. It is clear that survivors want accountability. I want to sincerely thank all survivors for the bravery they have shown in coming forward. Because of their courage, a light has been shone on a dark period of Irish history. Further recommendations of the scoping inquiry have also been accepted today by Government in relation to matters that are deeply

significant to survivors, particularly in relation to child protection.

'The report of the scoping inquiry found that current child protection systems in our schools are robust and effective, but there is always scope for further development. The safety of every child attending school today is of profound importance to survivors who spoke to the scoping inquiry. Work has already begun to implement these recommendations.'

In a subsequent press conference, Ms McEntee adds that the religious groups involved in historical sexual abuse 'will be held accountable'.

As such, the MoS attempts to contact the department to ask about the real and current example of Clohessy's crimes being covered up by SJoG.

We contact five separate mobile phone numbers on the official Government contacts list. We send emails to a

number of addresses. We also contact the Government Information Service, which manages overall Government communications. No replies are received by yesterday morning and the MoS again informs the Deputy Government Press Secretary of the situation.

We are subsequently contacted by a civil servant who is not usually in the press office. After a few hours, the temporary spokesman returns, apologises for the delayed response, and says: 'The Department of Education and Youth does not comment on individual cases. The sexual abuse of a child is a criminal act that is repugnant to the whole community. It is the role of An Garda Síochána to determine if a criminal act has been committed and if an investigation is required.'

The statement does not answer whether it believes Br Forkan should step aside or be moved from his role at St John of God.

SJoG's German funder's response

KINDERNOTHILFE (KNH) welcomes the criminal conviction of Br Aidan. It is crucial that cases of sexual abuse are consistently pursued through legal channels and that perpetrators are held accountable, regardless of when or where the offences were committed.

Our deepest sympathies go to the victims. Their voices deserve to be heard, justice must be served and their protection ensured. Protecting children must always be the highest priority in any society and institution.

KNH has been co-operating with St John of God in Malawi for years and has been providing financial support to various projects. However, this funding was temporarily suspended in 2018 after concerns about potential risks and unresolved issues related to child protection came to light. The resumption of funding occurred only after a thorough review, based on the condition that a significantly strengthened child protection strategy, clear institutional reforms, and transparent communication from the partner organisation were put in place. These measures were promptly implemented.

We remain in close dialogue with our local partners to ensure that children's rights and their protection are rigorously upheld.

With regard to Br Donatus, it is in our view now urgent that an independent and transparent review of all related events be conducted. Individuals who held central responsibilities and may have knowingly contributed to the endangerment of children should not be allowed to assume further leadership roles in child-related institutions – whether they are still active or have already left. We think an independent investigation into Donatus Forkan's role in sending and tolerating Br Aidan's presence in Malawi is a necessary step after the court ruling. This is essential not only to clarify responsibility but also to draw structural consequences and improve systems for child protection.

As a children's rights organisation, we have a clear stance on child protection: Religious institutions, like all other institutions, must never evade responsibility or remain silent. Instead, they must implement effective child protection systems.

This includes:
Creating transparency: All known abuse cases must be fully investigated and published, regardless of the perpetrator's position or rank.

Taking responsibility: Those who have failed – whether through active cover-up or neglect – must be held accountable.

Strengthening child protection systems: Every religious institution must implement child protection policies, regularly review them and ensure their application.

Introducing independent oversight: Abuse must never be dealt with internally. External, independent bodies are needed to investigate and monitor incidents.

Listening to and supporting the affected: Their voices must be taken seriously – not only legally but also pastorally, psychologically and financially.