

The legacy of Maeve Binchy

Weekend



Queen Maeve

Fellow writers celebrate the life and legacy of the cherished author

Downfall: The last days of Boris Johnson

Review



Philly McMahon: How to stop David Clifford

See Sport



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Saturday, July 9, 2022

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Pension plan to give more to workers retiring at 67

Financial reward for those who work later in life

Gabija Gataveckaite
POLITICAL REPORTER

PEOPLE who work until they are 67 and older are in line for a higher rate of State pension than those retiring at 66, under new plans being considered by the Government.

It would financially reward people who retire later in life while keeping the State pension age at 66.

Social Protection Minister

Heather Humphreys met Green Party leader Eamon Ryan this week to discuss the issue. She also previously met Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and Public Expenditure Minister Michael McGrath.

Under the proposals, the "benchmark" State pension would remain at 66, but people who work until they are 67 and older would be in line for a bigger pension. It is not clear at this stage how much higher

this would be each week.

It is understood the higher amount for those retiring at 67 or above would be "actuarially adjusted" to take account of the extra years worked.

However, government figures are anxious about the political backlash associated with such proposals, which are viewed as contentious by many within the Coalition.

Full report: Page 8



'Heartbroken' woman spends week at airport trying to find parents' ashes

AN AMERICAN tourist has described being "trapped" in Dublin Airport for the past week as she desperately tries to find her lost baggage, which contains her parents' ashes. Donna O'Connor wanted to scatter her Irish-American parents' (above) remains in Co Mayo. However, her plans have been plunged into doubt after the disappearance of her luggage, leaving Ms O'Connor "heartbroken". See Pages 4&5

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Vol. 131 No. 163 Irish Independent



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People who retire at 67 or older may get bigger pension

Gabija Gataveckaite
POLITICAL REPORTER

PEOPLE who work until they are 67 and older are in line for a higher rate of State pension than those retiring at 66, under plans being considered by the Government.

The new proposals would financially reward people who retire later in life and pay them a higher weekly pension rate, while keeping the State pension age at 66.

Social Protection Minister Heather Humphreys met Green Party leader Eamon Ryan this week to discuss the issue.

She has also previously met Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and Public Expenditure and Reform Minister for Michael McGrath to discuss the issue.

Senior Government officials across a number of departments also met yesterday. However, sources said discussions were still in their early stages, with "a lot of work" yet to be done.

Under the proposals, the "benchmark" State pension would remain at 66, but people who work until they are 67 and older would be in line for a bigger pension.

It is not clear at this stage how much higher per week this amount would be.

It is understood the higher amount for those retiring at 67 or above would be "actuarially adjusted" to take account of the extra years worked.

However, government figures are afraid of the political backlash over such proposals, which are viewed as contentious by many within the Coalition.

Senior figures are worried they may be accused of raising the State pension age to 67 by the backdoor.

The State pension age was set to rise to 67 in January of last year before the Government halted the change.

And Taoiseach Micheál Martin last week vowed the State pension age would not rise beyond 66, even if it means small PRSI increases.

The new proposals will be viewed as a compromise between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Many Fianna Fáil TDs view the State pension age – and keeping it at 66 – as a hardline issue that will dictate

the survival of the party.

Sources said there was merit to the proposals, despite emphasising that discussions were still in their early stages.

The move comes amid calls from Fine Gael for "flexibility" on the pension age, with some seeking a move away from a set retirement age.

The proposals are not part of the Pensions Commission recommendations, which said the State pension age should rise to 67, but not for another number of years.

Many in Fine Gael blame the party's stance on pensions for losing 12 seats. In the party's 2020 manifesto, it pushed for transitional payments – to bridge the gap between retirement age and the pension age – for those retiring at 65 and 66.

While government sources backed up Ms Humphreys' comments on the need for "flexibility" as being the party's stance on pensions now, some TDs and senators who spoke to the *Irish Independent* were unable to say what the party position was.

Contributions

Long-term family carers of more than 20 years are also in line for the State contributory pension. The State would retrospectively make contributions for long-term carers who haven't been able to meet the minimum of 520 paid contributions.

This was a recommendation in the Pensions Commission report.

It is understood Fianna Fáil is particularly keen on this measure.

A government decision on the Pensions Commission's report has been long awaited and was initially expected last April.

A senior source said that in compiling work on the findings of the report, the Department of Social Protection had taken into consideration the preliminary analysis of Census 2022.

It is now likely that a formal decision will be made by the Government in the autumn, after the summer recess.

Ms Humphreys said this week it would be a number of months before an announcement would be made.



Post Boris, Martin looks ahead to a better Dublin-London relationship

John Downing

THE Taoiseach has said he hopes that the new UK prime minister can help rebuild relations with Dublin.

Micheál Martin said there was now an opportunity to look afresh at British-Irish links as relations, across five prime ministers since 1990, have deteriorated in recent years in the aftermath of Brexit in 2016 and are widely believed to be at a 30-year low.

The Taoiseach was speaking after a meeting of the British-Irish Council in Guernsey, a grouping of government leaders in these islands that was set up as part of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

The London delegation at this meeting was led by junior Northern Ireland Office minister Conor Burns, a Belfast-born politician who comes from a Catholic background but who grew up in England and has been active in the Conservative Party since his college years.

Michael Gove – a one-time ally of the former prime minister Boris Johnson – had been expected to lead the UK government

delegation in Guernsey.

However, he was sacked from Mr Johnson's cabinet on Wednesday night, less than a day before Mr Johnson resigned as PM.

The British-Irish Council is made up of representatives from the UK and Irish governments, the home-rule administrations in Scotland,



It was always based on trust, working together and giving each other a heads up

Wales and Northern Ireland and the governments of the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey.

Since its inception, the taoiseach of the day generally attends but London often sends a more junior representative, and yesterday the Democratic Unionist Party boycotted the meeting in line with its ongoing objections to the EU Northern Ireland trade protocol.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Mr Burns defended Brexit and the UK's handling of it thus far.

However, he also agreed work was needed to improve British-Irish relations but said the UK had the right to protect its own interests after Brexit.

Although the UK government is legislating to change the Northern Ireland Protocol, he said its preference remained for a negotiated solution.

But the Taoiseach said he hoped the relationship between Dublin and London could be "rebuilt".

Mr Martin said unilateralism by the UK government on any issue had "never worked" and he recalled being part of the Irish government when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in April 1998.

"It was always based on trust, working together and giving each other a heads up," Mr Martin said.

Mr Burns, who helped run Mr Johnson's campaign for the Conservative Party leadership in 2019, said the move to oust the prime minister had been an "emotional and turbulent" period. He said Mr Johnson was his boss and his friend and the process to replace him should happen in a dignified manner.



News

Pope Francis demands 'zero tolerance' in fight against clerical abuse in the Catholic church

Ask Me Anything **Health & Living** - Pages 26-33

“My husband resents my closeness to my mother”



Independent.ie 

Monday, June 12, 2023

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One in five on waiting list turns down council home

Reasons for refusals include houses having insufficient storage, no second bathroom, or being too small

Gabija Gataveckaite
POLITICAL REPORTER

OVER 5,000 offers of social housing were refused in the past two years, with a variety of reasons given, an *Irish Independent* analysis can reveal.

An average of one in five offers was turned down, with almost 25,000 offers of social housing made across 2021 and 2022.

As many as two in five offers were refused last year alone, according to a county-by-county breakdown.

Reasons for offers being refused included houses being too small, lacking in garden or parking space, or being located too close to an ex-partner.

Lack of storage for motorbikes and bedrooms being too small

were also among the reasons for nearly 5,100 social housing offers being declined in 2021 and 2022. Kildare saw 38pc of homes refused.

Housing expert Rory Hearne said there are “many reasons” why offers may be rejected. For example, a

family with two children may be offered a one-bedroom apartment, or a property may be too far away from families and support networks.

Report: Pages 12-13

The Cat that got the cream: Cillian Buckley is mobbed by teammates after his last-second goal secured a dramatic victory for Kilkenny in yesterday's Leinster Senior Hurling Championship final against Galway at Croke Park.

PHOTO: HARRY MURPHY/SPORTSFILE

Hero Buckley's late Lazarus act - Sport Pullout



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Vol. 132 No. 139 Irish Independent



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Why 5,000 people on waiting lists turned down offer of housing

No second toilet and lack of storage among reasons

Gabija Gataveckaite
POLITICAL REPORTER

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Reasons for offers being refused included houses being too small, lacking in garden or parking space, or being located too close to an ex-partner.

Lack of storage for motorbikes and bedrooms being too small were also among the reasons for nearly 5,100 social housing offers being refused in 2021 and 2022.

Kildare had the highest rate of declined offers, with 38pc of homes refused.

Apartments or duplexes being offered instead of houses is one of the most common reasons for refusals.

People on council waiting lists also complained that homes being offered were in areas known for anti-social behaviour.

Leitrim County Council said in some cases homes were turned down as they are "too close to an ex-partner".

Reasons for council offers being rejected included tenants wanting new or refurbished homes; not wanting apartments; they weren't happy with the heating system; and the area had bad internet connection.

Among the most common reasons for rejection were gardens being too small, no pets allowed on the property and

the location being "unsuitable". Prospective tenants also refused offers on medical grounds.

Some said that the homes on offer did not have sufficient storage, while the lack of a second bathroom was also noted as a reason for refusal. Some people refused an offer of housing because parking spaces were too far away or the property was too far away from schools.

Rory Hearne, lecturer on housing at Maynooth University, said there are "many reasons" why offers may be rejected.

For example, a family with two children may be offered

Kildare had highest rate of declined offers at 38pc

a one-bedroom apartment, or a family member may have mobility needs that have not been considered. The property may also be too far away from the support network of extended family.

"For privileged people it is probably hard to understand that this is a legitimate reason to turn down accommodation, because if you have enough income to buy everything like childcare or healthcare, then you can choose to live where you want," said Mr Hearne.

"But if you are on lower income, you tend to rely more on family support networks for childcare and basic social networks.

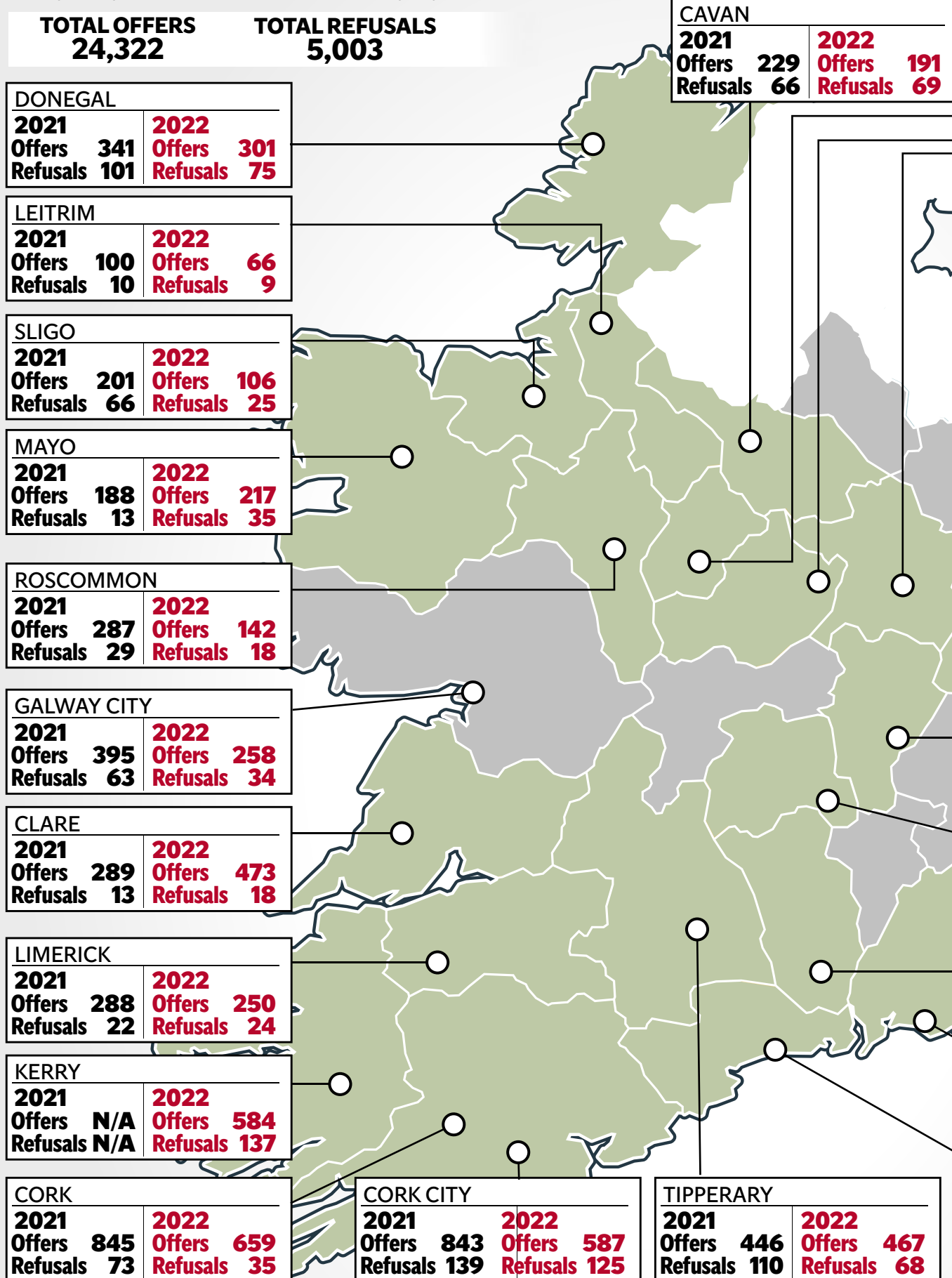
"So it is understandable why people would turn down an offer in the hope of getting somewhere appropriate."

He pointed out that victims of domestic violence or anti-social behaviour did not

HOUSING OFFERS REFUSED 2021 - 2022

Graphic shows offers and refusals in 2021 and 2022 per council.

Six councils refused to provide data. These were: Monaghan, Offaly, Carlow, Louth, Galway County, and Wicklow councils. Laois and Kerry only provided data for 2022



SOME OF THE REASONS GIVEN FOR REFUSING

"Too near the main road for small child"

"Keeping of certain pets not allowed"

"Undesirable housing estate Anti-social behaviour"

"Don't like location and no garden"

"Too far away from school"

"Lack of public transport"

"Property only has one bathroom"

Leinster House urged to 'keep promises' on free sanitary products

Gabija Gataveckaite
POLITICAL REPORTER

CALLS are being made for the Houses of the Oireachtas to "keep promises" in providing free sanitary products throughout Leinster House.

Concerns have been raised by the lack of free period products throughout the complex, with dispensers in men's and women's bathrooms often empty.

Last week, the *Irish Independent* observed that no free period products were available in any of the bathrooms.

The only dispenser which had tampons and pads available requested two €1 coins for each product.

After queries from this newspaper to the Houses of the Oireachtas, the dispensers which sell or provide products for free were fully stocked the following day.

In 2019, a cross-party motion which called for free sanitary products in all public buildings passed the Dáil after it was brought forward by the Women's Caucus.

A forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament in 2021, presented to Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghail, recommended that "free period

products and sanitary bins should be made available in all toilets in the parliamentary complex".

A spokeswoman for the Oireachtas said that in response to the motion and report, free period products have been available "in a selection of bathrooms" across the Leinster House complex "for some time now".

"The locations are primarily aimed at visitors which often include school groups but also are available to the wider community.

"This measure furthers the

Last week there were no free products in any of the bathrooms

aim of creating a more inclusive parliament and is of benefit to the entire community of staff and visitors.

"We aim to provide a choice of either free or paid products in a selection of facilities focused mainly on visitor areas."

Fianna Fáil senator Lisa Chambers said there is no need for "vending machines" which sell products in the bathrooms as the need for coins to pay is "ridiculous".

"You might get caught short and forget to bring something with you on a particular day – it's definitely a good initiative to put products in and I don't think we need to over complicate it.

"We should do what we said we'd do – a very simple concept, just put in some baskets like other public places do and put some sanitary products in."

She said it is not an issue of resourcing but rather has been put on "the long finger".

"Women are so used to bringing their own products that it's probably not a massive priority.

"Obviously, period poverty probably is not a massive issue in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

"But that's besides the point. If we said we were going to do something, we should do it. It's about leading by example and if a small coffee shop can manage it, so can we."

Plan International Ireland, a leading girls' rights organisation, said institutions should "live up" to their promises by making period products free.

"The unaffordability of period products for many women and girls is a major contributory factor to period injustice in Ireland," said Paul O'Brien, CEO of Plan.

Agriculture minister urges MEPs to rejoin negotiations on restoration of peatlands

Gabija Gataveckaite

AGRICULTURE minister Charlie McConalogue has urged Fine Gael's grouping at EU level, the European People's Party (EPP), to rejoin negotiations over nature restoration laws.

The EPP pulled out of talks last week over proposed new laws to restore and protect nature.

The plans to restore Europe's natural habitats – 81pc of which are classed as in poor health – have drawn significant opposition from some governments and lawmakers.

The European Commission has proposed that countries would have to introduce measures to restore 30pc of farmed peatlands by 2030, rising to 50pc by 2040 and 70pc by 2050.

Nature restoration and rewil-



Agriculture Minister Charlie McConalogue wants EPP back

pointed to see the European People's Party walk away from negotiations," he told RTÉ's *This Week*.

"That is not the way to get a proportionate outcome here." He said the Irish position is "reflected" in the proposed laws.

"At national level, the three parties in government have worked very closely to ensure that our national situation can be reflected in relation to the new nature restoration law.

"What we now need to see is that EPP rejoin those negotiations at European level and we need a balanced, proportionate outcome."

Sinn Féin has said it will support the proposed EU Nature Restoration law after it said additions to the legislation's text should alleviate concerns expressed by Irish farmers and rural communities.

LONGFORD	
2021	2022
Offers for both years	427
Refusals for both years	84
WESTMEATH	
2021	2022
Offers 131	Offers 130
Refusals 29	Refusals 24
MEATH	
2021	2022
Offers 765	Offers 455
Refusals 233	Refusals 48
FINGAL	
2021	2022
Offers 915	Offers 925
Refusals 248	Refusals 198
DUBLIN CITY	
2021	2022
Offers 2788	Offers 2663
Refusals 764	Refusals 576
SOUTH DUBLIN	
2021	2022
Offers 735	Offers 988
Refusals 146	Refusals 200
DLR	
2021	2022
Offers 484	Offers 573
Refusals 75	Refusals 63
KILDARE	
2021	2022
Offers 996	Offers 600
Refusals 210	Refusals 230
LAOIS	
2021	2022
Offers N/A	Offers 383
Refusals N/A	Refusals 63
KILKENNY	
2021	2022
Offers 399	Offers 293
Refusals 89	Refusals 42
WEXFORD	
2021	2022
Offers 320	Offers 368
Refusals 73	Refusals 105
WATERFORD	
2021	2022
Offers 464	Offers 621
Refusals 106	Refusals 104

want to live close to perpetrators.

Some people offered homes failed to make contact with officials to accept their offers, Tipperary County Council said.

Kerry County Council said properties were turned down because even if pets were allowed, dogs listed as dangerous were not allowed on the property.

It said homes were also turned down because motorbikes didn't fit; there were no electric car-charging facilities; and gardens had no shed.

"Furniture does not fit" was also given as a reason, indicating insufficient space for a family-sized table and chairs.

Many councils said tenants were already happy in their current property and did not want to move.

People also declined properties because they were Approved Housing Body (AHB) homes and not owned by the local council.

While Kildare had the highest rejection rate last year, Cavan County Council saw a refusal rate of 36pc last year, up from 28pc in 2021. Clare had the lowest rejection rate at just 3.8pc in 2022.

More than one in five social housing offers were rejected in nine areas: Wexford, Kerry, Sligo, South Dublin, Kildare, Fingal, Cavan, Dublin City and Cork City.

Six councils refused to provide data: Monaghan, Offaly, Carlow, Louth, Galway County and Wicklow.

'Furniture does not fit' was also given as a reason for rejection

Some councils have put in place choice-based letting to allocate homes. In some cases, such as in Meath, this has helped to reduce rejection rates.

Under this system, social housing applicants use an online portal to express their interest in properties which are advertised or may come on stream shortly.


In the Meath County Council area, refusal rates dropped from 30pc in 2021 to 10.5pc in 2022 after the system was introduced in December 2021.

However, Galway City Council has had the system in place since 2020 and its refusal rate rose by 3pc between 2021 and 2022.

Social housing waiting lists have reduced in recent years, with 57,842 people deemed qualified for housing supports last November. This is a reduction of over a third compared to 2016.

Councils can deem refusals to be reasonable or not reasonable and people can decline offers without losing their place on the list.

However, those who refuse more than one reasonable offer in the course of a year are suspended from the list for a year and lose their rent supplement, which is a welfare

 **News**
Almost 1,400 asylum-seekers homeless because of lack of state provision

"Wanting to live near family/supports"

"House is too close to ex"

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DOCTOR JENNIFER GRANT

‘How do I stop making myself a doormat?’
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Monday, March 20, 2023

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Airport terror attack risk as security ‘loophole’ exposed

Whistleblower warns Transport Minister screening of new airport staff is ‘not fit for purpose’

Gabija Gataveckaite

TRANSPORT Minister Eamon Ryan has been warned security screening at Dublin Airport is “not fit for purpose” and leaves risks for a possible terrorist attack.

A Dublin Airport whistleblower made the shock claim in a protected

disclosure to the Green Party leader which is now the subject of an investigation by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA).

In the whistleblower’s protected disclosure, which has been seen by the *Irish Independent*, it is alleged screening at the airport is in a “critical situation” which leaves possible

gaps for explosive devices to slip through and on board flights.

The disclosure was handed to Mr Ryan in the Dáil chamber last June.

It says the minister is allowing a “roll of the dice” each morning and hoping “that nothing happens”.

A lapse in standards of staff train-

ing has led to “below par” security screening at the airport, where “vulnerabilities” could be “exploited”.

It says these may even lead to terrorist attacks on a par with Lockerbie, the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of the UK.

The IAA has launched a formal investigation into the protected

disclosure, as it has found “prima facie” evidence that “wrongdoing may have occurred”.

The whistleblower is currently in dispute with their employer over a pay review and a report arising from their accusations of bullying.

Full report: Page 4-5



Champions: Brian Gleeson lifts the trophy after Ireland won the U-20 Six Nations against England in Cork. PHOTO: DAVID FITZGERALD

Under-20s cap weekend of wins for Irish sport

A GLORIOUS Irish sporting weekend concluded yesterday with back-to-back Grand Slam wins to add to Friday’s Cheltenham Gold Cup success.

The Ireland U-20 rugby team overcame the English challenge at Musgrave Park in Cork just 24 hours after the senior squad did the same at the Aviva Stadium. It came after trainer Willie Mullins captured his third Gold Cup with Galopin Des Champs on Friday.

Full coverage: Sport Pullout

TOMORROW



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Exclusive

Warning: Terrorist attack danger as security screening at Dublin Airport ‘not fit for purpose’

Issues ‘could lead to attack on a par with Lockerbie’

Gabija Gataveckaite
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

TRANSPORT Minister Eamon Ryan has been warned security screening at Dublin Airport is “not fit for purpose” and leaves risks for a possible terrorist attack.

A Dublin Airport whistleblower made the shock claim in a protected disclosure to the Green Party leader which is now the subject of an investigation by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA).

In the whistleblower’s protected disclosure, which has been seen by the *Irish Independent*, it is alleged screening at the airport is in a “critical situation” which leaves possible gaps for explosive devices to slip through and on-board flights.

The disclosure was handed to Transport Minister Eamon Ryan in the Dáil chamber last June.

It says the minister is allowing a “roll of the dice” each morning and hoping “that nothing happens”.

A lapse in standards of staff

training has led to “below par” security screening at the airport, where “vulnerabilities” could be “exploited”.

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The whistleblower is currently in dispute with their employer over a pay review and a report arising from their accusations of bullying.

Dublin Airport witnessed chaotic scenes after the lifting of pandemic restrictions and passengers were forced to wait for hours in queues outside terminals.

DAA scrambled to recruit additional staff post-pandemic, and the disclosure claims this has dramatically reduced the standard of training for screening staff, as most of the trainers have no previous experience in the roles.

The remaining staff are under “immense pressure” to screen passengers, according to a whistleblower who has waived their right to anonymity, but does not yet wish to be named.

Airport screening staff must pass exams, and rules state that only two fails are allowed, according to the disclosure.

However, the disclosure alleges this is being “ignored” by DAA.

Many staff members are put through several times, “until” they pass their exams.

Newly hired workers tasked with search duties at the airport have been “observed completing exams using Google Translate”.

Due to an insufficient number of security staff, screening staff are allegedly being utilised in other ways by being handed different coloured lanyards, which identifies what area they are trained in.

The IAA has reviewed the disclosure and has found there is “prima facie evidence that a relevant wrongdoing may have



Varadkar played good cop to Biden’s bad cop as both men



Senan Molony

JOE BIDEN summed up Ireland’s work in America and around the world last week, as Taoiseach Leo Varadkar launched a major diplomatic push.

“Ireland is a global force in culture and the arts,” said the US president. That is recognition by the most

powerful man in the world that this small country is truly a planetary leader in soft power – including persuasion, charm and likeability.

While other ministers toiled in fruitful vineyards across five continents, Mr Varadkar led the St Patrick’s Day delegation to Washington DC. It was more than a charm offensive with business execs and thought leaders.

There was also the matter of invisibly applying the sheer squeeze of that soft power on the Northern Irish parties. It was a task Mr Biden and Mr Varadkar operated in tandem.

If you’re Irish, come into the parlour, where there’s warmth, conviviality, good company and the spoils of prosperity. That was the promise dangled tantalisingly in front of unionist politicians.

DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson and his entourage were welcomed into the Irish Embassy residence, where the party invitations were so popular the place was nearly drunk dry. Then he was feted among his Irish friends in the heart of the White House.

The Taoiseach played good cop, President Biden bad cop. Behind all the pious tributes

to the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement – and platitudes about peace, prosperity and progress – was the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove.

It cements the Good Friday Agreement as the only way forward

The message was unmistakable: the DUP has to bank its win on the Windsor Framework and get back into power-sharing at Stormont. The DUP may

not like the idea of having a Sinn Féin first minister, but it will have to suck it up. The alternative is utter isolation.

Mr Biden has no shortage of acumen and intellectual steel. His “Grandpop” stories were going somewhere.

All references to times of yore and ancestor lore were somehow a secret scripture: miss this boat and it will be generations before unionism can make the necessary crossing to a new shore.

Mr Varadkar’s task, on the other hand, was to convey unthreatening understanding and deep respect for the unionist tradition. But

it came with the subtext that 21st-century Ireland is moving ahead, with or without them.

Diplomacy can be messy, a fuzzy forging of the alchemy that leads into political alternatives. President Biden and the Taoiseach both made gaffes, but of the inconsequential kind.

Mr Varadkar’s ill-judged intern joke might have reflected on the Clintons and served to undermine some of the rhetoric about America’s amazing role in the Good Friday peace deal, but it doesn’t alter anything.

Mr Biden, similarly, asked



Long wait: Passengers faced long queues for security clearance due to staffing issues at Dublin Airport last March.

PHOTO: GARETH CHANEY/COLLINS PHOTOS

occurred", documents seen by the *Irish Independent* show.

The IAA will take "appropriate action", which will aim to "address the relevant wrongdoing" with regard to the "nature and seriousness" of the issue.

It is expected this will be by way of an investigation into this possible "wrongdoing".

DAA promised security queues of 30 minutes maximum in an interview with the *Irish Independent* last May.

However, the whistleblower claims overhearing a conversation by security supervisors, who called the promised 30-minute queue a "career suicide".

The disclosure states this would make a "critical situation" worse as the standard of screening in Dublin Airport is "below par".

This would "deepen the security vulnerability that DAA executives have created".

The protected disclosure states how vulnerabilities can be "exploited" and references the example of the Lockerbie bombing in 1988.

port said it did not comment on issues which relate to "aviation security operations" or protected disclosures given to the minister.

A spokesperson said the IAA is responsible for receiving disclosures "of relevant wrongdoings on all matters relating to the management of Irish-controlled airspace, the safety regulation of Irish civil aviation and the oversight of civil aviation security in the State".

A spokesperson for the IAA said the authority "cannot disclose information relating to any protected disclosure as per the relevant legislation".

DAA said it was not "aware" of an investigation by the IAA into the airport in relation to a protected disclosure.

The whistleblower contacted Mr Ryan's department several months after the protected disclosure was handed to Mr Ryan in the Dáil, having not heard back.

After a back and forth, department officials then asked if they could share the



A report from the European Aviation Safety Agency last year found seven prohibited items passed through the airport, including guns and explosives

The disclosure states how the device that detonated on board Pan Am flight 103 did not originate in London, where it stopped over, or Frankfurt, where it originated.

The suitcase with explosives had come from Malta, which passed through Frankfurt and was loaded on the Pan Am flight.

This is not the first time serious concerns have been raised about explosives passing through the airport.

A report from the European Aviation Safety Agency last year found seven prohibited items passed through, including guns and explosives.

A hard copy of the protected disclosure was handed to Mr Ryan in the Dáil chamber by Labour TD Duncan Smith last June.

The Department of Trans-

disclosure with the IAA and later did so.

In 2021, an external investigator was hired to examine a complaint of bullying which was submitted by the whistleblower.

Seven incidents were investigated. However, the external investigator found only one incident could have undermined the whistleblower's right to dignity at work.

As a result, the allegation of bullying was not upheld.

The whistleblower is currently in dispute with the DAA at the Workplace Relations Commission over the report from the external investigator and how one of the recommendations, when released, was redacted.

The whistleblower is also in dispute with his employer due to a pay review.

Hourigan faces tougher Green sanctions if she votes with SF on eviction ban

Gabija Gataveckaite
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

TOUGHER sanctions loom for Green Party rebel TD Neasa Hourigan, who has said she will vote against the Government in a Sinn Féin motion on extending the eviction ban.

This is despite her previous comments that voting with an opposition motion would not actually reverse the end to the eviction ban.

Green Party TDs and senators will meet tonight to consider the Sinn Féin motion, which will be voted on in the Dáil tomorrow.

There have been suggestions Ms Hourigan could see tougher sanctions from the party as it will be the third time she has voted against the Government.

Last week, Sinn Féin approached all independent and opposition TDs on the vote. It is understood no contact was made with Ms Hourigan.

In 2020, she voted against the Government on opposition amendments to legislation extending a rent freeze and eviction ban to only tenants affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a result, she and Minister of State Joe O'Brien's speaking rights were stripped for two months.

Last year, she voted with a Sinn Féin motion on the National Maternity Hospital, following which she was suspended from the Greens for six months.

However, it is unlikely Ms Hourigan will be expelled from the party.

Former party chair Hazel Chu told the *Irish Independent*: "The Green Party has procedures in place and nobody can expel her unless the national executive decides to do so."

TD Patrick Costello, who previously voted against the Government alongside Ms Hourigan, last week was expected to not vote against the Government on the motion tomorrow.

He is expected to make a final decision after tonight's meeting.

"Green Party TDs are expected to vote in line with the Government," said a spokesperson for Green Party leader Eamon Ryan.

"The parliamentary party will discuss this matter over the coming days."

Green Party chair, Senator



Green Party's Neasa Hourigan looks set to vote against the Government for a third time

Pauline O'Reilly, said the punishment as a result of Ms Hourigan's vote would go "beyond" previous sanctions.

"I believe that there will be sanctions and that they will go beyond previously," she told RTE.

She added: "A general feeling is that we have to step things up."

Meanwhile, Labour leader Ivana Bacik has written a letter to the Taoiseach asking him to extend the eviction ban.

Labour has threatened to hold a vote of no confidence in the Government if its legislation on extending the ban is not passed by Government.

Labour has said it will support the Sinn Féin motion tomorrow. However, "if it fails", the party has sent legislation to Leo Varadkar which would see an extension of the ban.

The law states the ban should only be lifted if there has been a decrease in homelessness numbers for four months in a row.

"[The law] goes on to empower the minister to lift the ban when monthly homelessness reports show a reduction for four successive months," Ms Bacik writes.

She said Labour does not have enough Dáil speaking time to enact this law but "we know that the Government can act to pass emergency legislation within that timeframe, so I am asking you to do so now".

The Labour Party is set to bring a motion of no confidence in the Government on March 29 if proposed emergency laws are not passed.

cranked up pressure on the DUP

the leaders of the Northern Irish parties to stand and be recognised in the East Room of the White House before an invited audience.

He addressed them as "gentlemen". As Mary Lou McDonald, Michelle O'Neill and Naomi Long came into the picture, he corrected himself, saying: "And ladies."

Again, an ultimate irrelevancy, except that it shows the modern reality that Northern Ireland is no longer an old conflict among old men. The visit to Ireland by Bill Clinton and Mr Biden will be the follow-up double whammy.



Reception: Michelle O'Neill and Jeffrey Donaldson (right) at the White House. PHOTO: PA

Celebrating the anniversary cements the Good Friday Agreement as the only way forward. Crucially, it comes with an in-built mechanism that could lead, perhaps decades hence, to a united Ireland.

As that prospect creeps closer, the aim of Irish diplomacy is to downplay any cause for alarm. Consent is key, everyone's comforted, and the rewards will be great.

In the meantime, the Taoiseach's trip contributed its measure in the medium term. Softly, softly, catchee Jeffrey.



Comment
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