

Sports Wednesday Dogged Newcastle hold Arsenal at bay Gordon D'Arcy Discipline is king if a team is to reign



Sally Hayden
Medical workers warn
of damage malnutrition
is doing to children as
Somalis suffer drought
World News



Róisín Ingle
I blame my mother for
my exercise aversion.
'It's not off the ground
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Life



Laura Slattery
Resolve to embrace
some new media habits
with six-step guide to
improve your life
Business

Capturing birds of prey Hidden shot of wildlife

A red kite lands between two buzzards in Ashbourne, Co Meath. The photograph was taken by amateur wildlife photographer Eamonn Coyle while camouflaged in a wildlife photography hide.



Overcrowding in hospitals likely to worsen due to flu

Minister blames 'perfect storm' of RSV, flu and Covid for record trolley numbers

PAUL CULLEN
Health Editor

Overcrowding in hospitals is likely to worsen as flu levels increase further, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly has warned. Speaking after a record of 931 patients on trolleys was set yesterday, Mr Donnelly said this was the result of a "perfect storm" of flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and Covid-19 waves. The Government's focus is on making sure that "all measures that can be taken are taken", the Minister said. This includes the use of all available private bed capacity and diagnostics, increased homes supports and assistance for GPs.

Defending his preparations for the expected winter pressures on the health service, he said the Government has committed an "unprecedented" level of investment in health since the Covid-19 pandemic, including almost 1,000 additional hospital beds. However, he said the health service has been hit by a "very severe" wave of flu, a "big wave" of RSV and renewed Covid cases. "So we have this perfect storm of RSV, flu and Covid, obviously, as well as all of the normal pressures that really has absorbed the significant additional capacity that has been put into the system."

Public hospitals will be able to access up to 360 beds in the private sector, twice the previously agreed amount, in a further measure aimed at reducing pressure on the health sector. Mr Donnelly is to brief the Cabinet today on the measures being taken to alleviate the overcrowding crisis, and will meet senior HSE management again on Friday. "We're very keen to see senior decision-makers on-site, particularly when patients need them, late at night or at the weekend," he told reporters at Beaumont Hospital in Dublin after a visit to its emergency department. He toured the emergency department at St Vincent's hospital earlier in the day and also met HSE officials.

Other countries in Europe are experiencing similar waves of respiratory viruses, he pointed out. Mr Donnelly advised people to wear masks on public transport and in crowded indoor settings, but said he did not anticipate any change to existing advice from the chief medical officer on a mask mandate, which has been sought by the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation. Mr Donnelly said the HSE had advised him that the flu wave is likely to get worse and to put more pressure on the system. "They don't believe the flu wave has peaked."

State facing 14,000 refugee bed shortfall

Current accommodation system 'unsustainable', Government told

'Inevitable' that new reception centres will have to be opened across the country

JACK HORGAN-JONES
and **JENNIFER BRAY**

The State is facing a shortfall of more than 14,000 beds for refugees before the end of March, with Government briefing documents starkly warning that the current accommodation system is "unsustainable".

Papers drawn up last month by the Department of Integration show "projected shortfalls in the immediate short term" and warn that a "significant acceleration in cross-Govern-

ment efforts" will be needed to source more accommodation. Without it, they note, "it is inevitable that there will be shortages of available accommodation" and internal modelling shows "gaps in provision of accommodation emerging". Briefing documents drawn up for Minister of State Joe O'Brien, who is taking up new responsibilities in the Department of Integration, warn that the "present provision model is also unsustainable as oversight of accommodation at this scale

and pace entails many challenges". The documents flag an "inability to engage with communities appropriately and in time" and note "operational challenges" and the problem of "continued concentration of available accommodation in particular areas" where there are pressures on services such as health and education.

'The far-right'

Mr O'Brien was advised that with more people continuing to arrive it is "inevitable" that new reception centres will have to be opened "across the country and for the foreseeable future".

A €50 million fund has been drawn up for communities and approved by the Government, but warnings around its necessity show the depths of the concerns in the department. Officials said that without it "we risk being hostage to the

far-right in many of our future negotiations, thus hobbling our ability to address our current accommodation shortage".

Modelling included in the documents shows that for beneficiaries of temporary protection – those arriving from Ukraine – there could be a shortfall of 8,024 places by March, in addition to a shortage of 6,155 places for international protection applicants. A "high risk" of losing existing accommodation should "providers pivot back to tourism" later in the year is also noted.

Doubt is also cast in the documents, released by the department following a Freedom of Information request, over the extent to which modular homes – a key part of the State's strategy to extend accommodation options beyond hotels and pledged accommodation – can be delivered. "Progress is slow

on this aspect, the briefing states, "because of continuing nervousness within the communities earmarked for even the phase one sites".

Mr O'Brien was told that "community engagement is ongoing in relation to phase two sites but it is likely that the scale of some projects may have to be reduced in response to community backlash". The document goes on to emphasise that new sites will be needed as it is likely some "will not work out because of problems either with the site or with the communities within which the units will be located".

The department itself is facing a staffing shortfall, with more than 25 urgent vacancies in its Ukrainian unit and elsewhere where staff have been diverted.

Social Democrats integration spokeswoman Jennifer

Whitmore said it was clear the department had been "overburdened".

"The additional pressure being placed on the department now means that other important functions will not be met," she said as she called on the Government to increase staffing, funding and assistance.

Documents reveal strain refugee influx putting on State: page 2

Tenants report rats, 'fake police' and CCTV cameras

SHAUNA BOWERS

People residing in private rented dwellings experienced soiled mattresses, landlords installing CCTV cameras, rats in kitchens and gardens and "fake police" telling them to leave the property, according to an analysis of tenancy tribunal reports from the past two years.

The Irish Times examined the 375 tribunal reports and corresponding determination orders published on the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) website last year. The tribunals,

one of the final steps in the dispute resolution process between tenants and landlords, took place during 2021-2022.

Rent arrears and overholding were the most common reason for landlords taking a dispute to the tenancy tribunal, with some tenants owing up to €60,000 in unpaid rent. Overholding is when a tenant remains in a property after a valid notice of termination has expired. For tenants, deposit retention, validity of notice of termination and breaching landlord obligations were the issues

that most commonly arose.

According to the analysis of published reports, 168 tribunals occurred due to a landlord appealing a case. 204 were as a result of appeals by tenants, with the remaining three initiated by third parties – people directly and adversely affected by neighbouring tenants.

Pay damages

The analysis found 75 instances of landlords having to pay damages for breaching obligations, issuing an invalid notice of termination or unjustifiably retain-

ing a deposit. The damages ranged from as little as €50 to the maximum amount allowed, €20,000. Some of the issues arising in the disputes included a landlord installing CCTV cameras that could monitor the tenants' actions, an illegal eviction that occurred after a landlord changed the locks and a landlord removing door hinges and disconnecting electricity.

In one case, a tenant complained about cat droppings in the dwelling and cat urine on the bed. In another, the tenants said one of the windows was broken,

which had caused mould. Another case heard how masked men woke up tenants, smashed some of their property and put them out on the streets.

A separate case detailed how "fake police" knocked on the door of a tenant to "intimidate her". In the case involving the masked men, the tribunal ruled in favour of the three tenants, and determined they were entitled to receive almost €27,000 in damages in total.

Many tenants 'overholding': page 5

Weather

Today will be a bright and breezy day with sunny spells and showers. Highest temperatures 11-12 degrees.

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Home News

Cold homes: The number of people who could not afford to properly heat their homes more than doubled last year, according to the Central Statistics Office: page 5

Hunger strike: An Irish man held in an Iranian prison has told his family he is going on hunger strike: page 4

World News

China restrictions: China has criticised as 'simply unreasonable' Covid-19 entry restrictions imposed by some countries on its travellers: page 6

Business Today

Daft report: Asking prices for homes increased by 6 per cent nationally last year despite evidence of a slowdown in the second half of 2022.

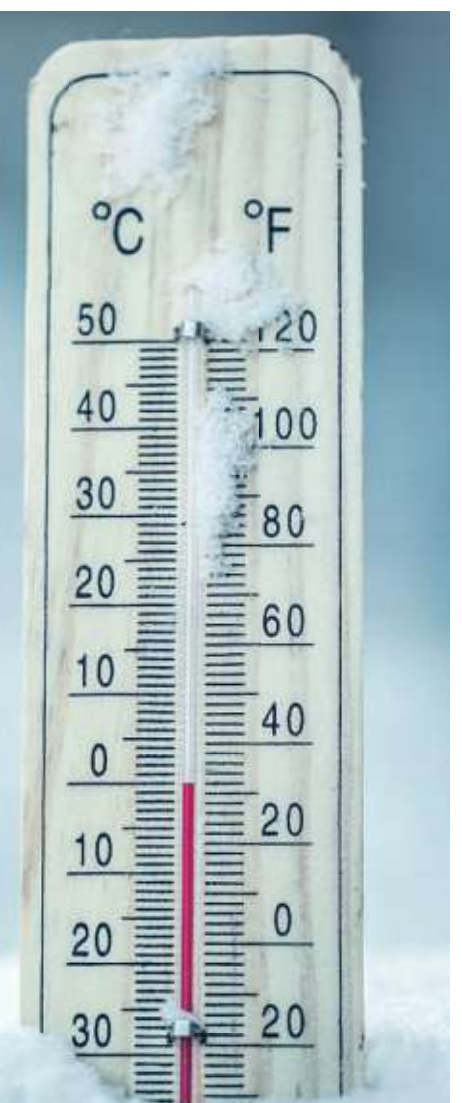
Meta decision: The DPC is expected to issue a decision that could limit Meta's ability to gather information from users.

Sports Wednesday

Rugby: Leinster continued being coy as to the exact nature of the procedure carried out on Johnny Sexton's face yesterday.

Hurling: Late points from Waterford squeezed them past 14-man Tipperary last night in Mallow in an exciting finish.

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The most wonderful time of the year Christmas tree recycling in Howth

■ Laura Moore recycling a Christmas tree at Harbour car park in Howth, Co Dublin. PHOTOGRAPH: DARA MAC DONÁIL

Many tenants 'overholding' as they can find nowhere else to go, RTB tribunal analysis reveals



Shauna Bowers

Rent arrears and overholding most frequent dispute types reported to the RTB in 2021, reports show

A tenant who had been served an eviction notice for the Co Clare property in which he lived with his family said he had no place to go.

Appearing before a tenancy tribunal via Microsoft Teams, the man, who had been accused of overholding by the landlord, said there were "many things wrong" with the house, such as the heating system.

The family did not like the dwelling, he said, adding they were not going to stay but "cannot find anywhere" else to live.

The tenant was facing a tribunal of three decision-makers in one of the final steps in the dispute resolution process between landlords and tenants, held by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

The determination of the tribunal is binding, and can be appealed only on a point of law at the High Court.

When a determination order is issued by the tribunal, it can be enforced if a party involved in the case makes an application to the District Court to make the RTB decision a court order. This, barristers working in the sector have said, is not unusual and does happen, though is not required in the majority of cases as most people comply.

In the Co Clare case, heard in March 2022, the tribunal determined that the tenant and his family must vacate the dwelling within 28 days of the date of issue of the determination order.

Desperation
There is desperation in many of the cases heard by the tribunals, with the disputes often laying bare the extent of the housing and homelessness crisis.

In May 2022, one appellant in Dublin had his appeal heard by a tribunal after he was served an eviction notice. De-

spite viewing 10 properties, he said he could not find alternative accommodation.

The tenant, who was accused of overholding, said he believed he was competing with about 800 other people for each property he attempted to rent.

He had two young children who were attending a school near the dwelling, he said, adding that a move to alternative accommodation would involve a change of school which would cause upset to his children.

The tribunal determined that the tenant must vacate and give up possession of the dwelling within a 42 days of the date of issue of the determination order.

The Irish Times analysed the almost 400 RTB tribunal reports and determination orders that were published in 2022. The reports detailed the disputes arising between tenants and landlords, or, in some cases, third parties who claimed to be affected by a tenancy.

According to the RTB's data, rent arrears and overholding were the most frequent dispute types reported in 2021, accounting for 31 per cent of all complaints made that year. The second most common reason reported was deposit retention (19 per cent of cases), followed by validity of notice of termination (17 per cent of cases) and a breach of landlord obligations (17 per cent of cases). A breakdown of figures for 2022 is awaited.

Fear of homelessness
The issue of overholding frequently results from a fear of becoming homeless, according to the evidence provided by tenants during the tribunals.

In another case, heard by the tribunal in March, the tenant's representative said they were making "every effort to find new accommodation and getting in contact with the correct people but that it had not yet succeeded".

The landlord in the same case said he required the dwelling for his own needs. His children shared a bedroom with him following the breakdown of his marriage, he said, and he had difficulties in terms of mortgage arrears.

In Mayo, a tenant who lived in a rented home with her three children said if she was evicted she and her family would be homeless. She told the tribunal in February that she was doing her best and was not overholding deliberately.

In April 2022, a couple renting a Dublin home, who had been served a notice of termination, told the tribunal they were

in the process of purchasing their own house.

They had paid a deposit for the property in February 2021, but "due to the imposition of Covid restrictions, labour shortages and supply issues the construction of the house was delayed" but would be completed in about three months.

The tenant said "due to the current housing crisis, when they received the notice of ter-

mination, their options were limited and they had to choose between being homeless or overholding".

The couple wanted to move out, he said, but "they were in an impossible situation, and it was difficult to find a short-term solution to their problem".

Sources working in the sector said while overholding is a common dispute type brought to the RTB, it can sometimes be agreed between parties that it is beneficial to take this course of action.

In some cases, landlords bring the case to the RTB "out of kindness" as tenants require a determination order to get on various housing support lists, such as social housing or homeless lists, legal sources said.

Meanwhile, other tenants stated they accepted and moved into dwellings with insufficient heating, mould or damp, as they had been homeless and just wanted a roof over their heads, sources working in the sector said. Later, these issues became bigger, resulting in some of them having to take a case to the RTB, complaining that their landlords had breached their obligations.

Ann-Marie O'Reilly, national advocacy manager at Thresh-old, a charity advocating for rental rights, said it can be quite

difficult for a renter to go to a landlord asking for repairs. Heating and boiler repairs are common issues that arise, she added.

"There's a bit of a sense among people who just want to keep their head down. What happens is people don't say anything and they put up with things that are not okay," she said, attributing this to the shortage of alternative accom-

This is reflected in RTB figures, which show 43,000 landlords left the private rental market over the past five years. Adding to this, a quarter of small landlords are likely or very likely to sell their rental properties in the next five years, according to research done by the board.

Tom Dunne, chairman of the RTB, recently told a meeting of the Oireachtas housing committee that this shift could be attributed to people who bought properties during the Celtic Tiger, rented them out when they up-sized, but have now sold them on as they are no longer in negative equity.

Income tax
However, Mary Conway, chairwoman of the Irish Property Owners' Association, said the current legislation and tax on rental income are the reasons behind landlords leaving the sector.

"For the most part, tenants are absolutely fine. Generally, the reason is the legislation, the RTB and the tax and how long it takes to get in and get things sorted out with regards to overholding," she said.

"Before you actually get to the RTB at all, it could be six months. So you're already down six months [rent payments] at that stage. I don't think tenants want to default on their rent. People can fall on hardship."

Under law, if rent arrears arise, a landlord must present the tenant with a written arrears warning notice of a minimum of 28 days. If the arrears are not being paid off during that time, a notice of termination can then be issued, equaling an additional 28 days.

If one of the parties decides to then take a case to the RTB, that results in things being delayed further.

The average processing time for an initial hearing of a complaint was 19.5 weeks in 2021, while the processing time for tribunals, the next step if the case is appealed, was 33.4 weeks.

A spokesman for the RTB said while the body "adapted speedily and implemented changes to processes to maintain services during the pandemic, the impact of Covid-19 inevitably created a backlog of cases".

In 2022, the body has also seen an increase in the volume of applications for dispute resolution, the spokesman said, which will also have an impact on processing times.

Most small landlords, 94 per cent, are part-time and do not manage properties as their primary occupation, a 2022 survey

by the RTB found. According to Ms Conway, this means margins are small, with many renting out the property only to cover their mortgage.

This creates difficult financial situations when tenants stop paying, she said, adding that mortgage arrears become a real concern.

Many tenants who fell into rent arrears and who appeared before a tenancy tribunal spoke about falling into financial hardship, with a significant proportion attributing this hardship to job losses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The extent of arrears varied significantly, according to the tribunal reports. Some landlords were owed one month's rent, while others had accumulated arrears in excess of €25,000. The highest level of arrears recorded in the reports was €60,000.

Ms Conway said 99.9 per cent of the time when a tribunal determines that a landlord is due the rent arrears, they do not receive it.

She said: "If they didn't have the money to pay initially, where are they going to get it to backpay? Landlords tend to just accept the losses. How can they pay for it, if they don't have it?"

Some data in the report relates to 2021. That year more than half (56 per cent) of recorded victims of sexual offences were younger than 18 when the offence occurred. Among suspected offenders of sexual violence, 98 per cent were male and 18 per cent were under 18.

More than half (53 per cent) of 25-64-year-olds in 2022 had a third-level education, the highest rate among the 27 European Union member states.

Employment reached a record 73.5 per cent in the first half of the year, with the estimated total number of hours worked per week in the third quarter recorded at 80.3 million hours.

Almost four-in-ten employees were working remotely at some point during 2021, with 74 per cent of them saying they had more time on their hands as a result.

Although society was slowly pulling away from the more extreme conditions brought about by Covid-19, data for the year showed the number of deaths where it was identified as the underlying cause in 2021 was 3,011, or 9.1 per cent of the total.

Cancer and circulatory disease were the largest causes of death in Ireland.

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Almost four-in-ten employees were working remotely at some point during 2021, with 74 per cent of them saying they had more time on their hands as a result.

Although society was slowly pulling away from the more extreme conditions brought about by Covid-19, data for the year showed the number of deaths where it was identified as the underlying cause in 2021 was 3,011, or 9.1 per cent of the total.

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Fire safety notice at 12-bedroom rental

Rush property also subject to separate investigation by Fingal County Council

Some rooms subdivided by plasterboard are little more than width of door

JACK POWER

A rental property with more than a dozen tenants has been served a fire safety notice over conditions in the house, which is also subject to a separate investigation by planning officials in Fingal County Council.

The property in Rush, north Co Dublin, has 12 bedrooms, some of which contain two beds, with foreign national tenants paying about €300-€400 a month in rent in cash. In some cases, rooms appear to have been subdivided, with plasterboard walls put up to create more bedrooms which, in some instances, are little more than the width of the door.

When The Irish Times visited the rental property in late March, there were 10 tenants in the house and several others who were not home at the time. Wires hung down from exposed light fittings in the ceiling, with several extension cords running across the upstairs hall into bedrooms.

A small fire broke out in the house on January 18th, with six units of the Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) responding to an emergency call to put out the fire. A DFB spokesman said an electrical installation was believed to be the source of the fire.

On foot of a follow-up inspection carried out on February 1st, officers served a fire safety notice on the premises, which is being appealed.

Inspections unit

Fingal County Council also said investigations by its planning enforcement unit and private rental standards inspections unit were "ongoing".

"The Residential Tenancies Board and the Revenue Commissioners have also been notified of suspected breaches of legislation governed by these two bodies," a spokesman for the council said.

Ottie, a tenant in his 40s, originally from Botswana, moved into the house in May

last year. Initially, he said he paid €300 in rent, which later increased to €400 a month.

He was asleep when the fire started at the back of the house near his room in January, only waking after it was extinguished.

After the fire, he said the electricity in the property was turned off for nearly two months, only being reconnected in mid-March.

Smaller room

Ottie, who does not want his full name published, said after the fire, he was moved into a smaller room in the house.

"My room that I got moved from was about 3 by 2 metres, but the one [the landlord] moved me to after the fire is around 1.5 by 2 metres," he said.

He received an eviction notice, dated March 27th and seen by The Irish Times, stating he had four weeks to leave as the landlord planned to substantially refurbish the room.

Two days later, however, he came home from work to find his belongings outside the house in bin bags, with the door of his bedroom locked, despite a Government ban on evictions in place at the time.

The landlord has been involved in a number of disputes with tenants heard by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) in recent years. In cases in 2017, 2018 and 2019, the RTB ruled eviction notices served by the landlord were invalid. The rental market regulator ruled in the landlord's favour in a 2019 case taken against a tenant overholding in the property and antisocial behaviour by two tenants.

The RTB made rulings in 2021 that the landlord was owed more than €7,700 and €13,500 in rent arrears by two other former tenants.

The landlord, who is not being named for legal reasons, did not respond to a series of questions from The Irish Times about conditions in the rental property.



Seán Mitchell: he has been in a battle over an eviction at an apartment in Dún Laoghaire for five years: 'The RTB didn't do much for us. They should've known what was going to happen'. Photograph: Nick Bradshaw

Residential Tenancies Board audit shows shortfall in 'cheap and speedy' resolutions



Shauna Bowers

Internal audit at quasi-judicial public body shows tasks were missed during appeals handling

It has been a long five years for Seán Mitchell. Since he received his first eviction notice for his rented apartment in St Helen's Court in Dún Laoghaire in 2018, life feels like a constant battle.

He, and many other tenants, attended the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) on four occasions. At the first hearing, the notice of termination he was served was deemed to be invalid.

The second hearing occurred after the 20 residents were all served notices. The landlord later withdrew the notices, realising the residents would come under the Tyrrelstown Amendment, which prohibits the eviction of 10 or more tenants in one complex.

"They [the landlord] came back and gave six of us notices then, leaving five of us in place so the amendment wouldn't apply. And then later down the line they'd be able to evict the rest. The RTB didn't do much for us. They should've known what was going to happen," the 60-year-old taxi driver said.

Following this, the RTB issued a determination order backing their vacation as sought by the owners, Donegal-based Mill Street in 2021.

"The RTB just said that this is the law and there is nothing we can do. They [the landlord] did everything properly, found loopholes in the legislation. There was nothing the RTB could do."

The RTB is a quasi-judicial public body set up under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, to support and develop a well-functioning rental sector. Under law, tenants and landlords can bring disputes to the RTB. First, they can opt for mediation or adjudication, which is a formal process in which an appointed adjudicator makes a decision, based on evidence presented by both parties, on the issue of dispute.

Adjudication hearing

If they are unhappy with the determination of an adjudication hearing, it can then be appealed to a tribunal. The determination of the tribunal is binding, and can be appealed only on a point of law via the High Court.

When a determination order is issued by the tribunal, it can be enforced if a party involved in the case makes an application to the District Court to make the RTB decision a court order.

One of the aims of the Act under which the RTB was established is for disputes between landlords and tenants to be resolved "cheaply and speedily".

However, an internal audit, obtained by The Irish Times under Freedom of Information laws, highlighted a number of medium priority risks when it comes to the handling of adjudication and tribunals.

According to the audit, for

which the period under review was September 1st, 2020 until September 30th, 2021, cases were not dealt "with as speedily as possible and/or in a timely manner".

The audit also said tasks were missed during the appeals handling and tribunal processes as "individuals involved do not have their roles and responsibilities clearly defined".

"Reporting figures reported to the board are inaccurate and reflect inaccurate states of cases," the audit added.

A spokesman for the RTB said its dispute resolution service was "a vital service" and the RTB had "many of the powers that the courts have" but the way in which disputes were resolved was "less formal than a court".

"The dispute resolution procedures are also intended to be more accessible and faster than those of the courts. Together, this means that resolving a dispute through the RTB is simpler, less costly and less time consuming than it would be if landlords and tenants had to bring their disputes through the courts."

The spokesman said resolving disputes "ultimately helps increase compliance with rental rights and responsibilities and, where possible, keeps tenancies on track".

Processing times for dispute resolution can vary, but has generally increased in recent years. The average processing time for telephone mediation cases increased slightly from 9.1 weeks in 2020 to about 9.7 weeks in 2021. The average processing time for adjudication cases in 2021 was 19.5 weeks which is close to the time of 19.6 weeks in 2020.

Meanwhile, the average pro-

“They [the landlord] did everything properly, found loopholes in the legislation. There was nothing the RTB could do”

cessing time for tribunal cases decreased from 39.4 weeks in 2020 to 33.4 weeks in 2021. That was a significant rise on the 10-week processing time in 2019, and 14 weeks in 2018. The figures for 2022 are awaited.

A spokesman for the RTB said cases relating to rent arrears and illegal evictions were prioritised. "Both issues can put the tenancy at risk and can have a big impact on the affected party, and so the RTB prioritises these applications."

Demand for the service fluctuates year on year, but stood at 7,343 applications for dispute resolution last year, up on pre-pandemic figures when 6,185 applications were received in 2019. Applications reduced significantly during the lockdown periods of the Covid-19 crisis.

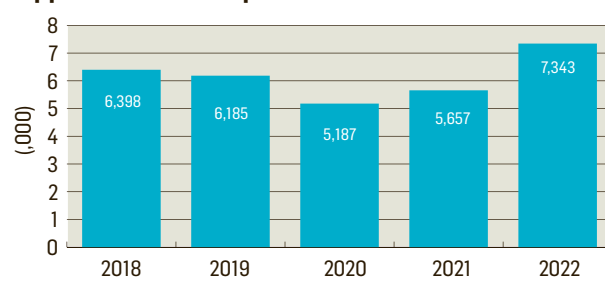
According to the board's own statistics, deposit retention is one of the biggest reasons behind tenants' decision to complain to the RTB, accounting for about 20 per cent of dispute resolution applications annually.

Individuals working in and representing the sector have consistently called for a deposit protection scheme, stating that in most cases, even when the RTB determines a tenant is entitled to their deposit back, they do not receive it.

This, legal professionals have said, would free up the

Dispute resolution

Applications for dispute resolution



Processing times

Year	Mediation (weeks)	Adjudication (weeks)	Tribunal (weeks)
2018	10.0	16.0	14.0
2019	10.0	16.0	10.0
2020	9.1	19.6	39.4
2021	9.7	19.5	33.4

RTB to deal with disputes centering on other complaints, reducing demand for the service, and, consequently, the waiting and processing times.

Under this proposed scheme, tenants would be enabled to lodge their deposit with an independent third party, such as the RTB, thus ensuring the prompt return of the deposit at the end of a tenancy.

A feasibility study was conducted on a tenancy deposit protection scheme in 2012 by Indecon International Economic Consultants, which said there were "significant financial risks" in any scheme, adding it would be "essential to ensure these risks are borne by any provider and not by the exchequer".

A spokesman for the Department of Housing said its Housing for All plan commits to an examination of the creation of a system of holding rental deposits, informed by international experience. This examination had a timeline of the second quarter of 2023, the spokesman said.

Similarly, Mary Conway, chairwoman of the Irish Property Owners' Association (IPOA), said when rent arrears accrued and the RTB determined the tenant must pay back these arrears to the landlord, in 99 per cent of cases, that money was not received.

"If they don't have the money, they don't have the money. It's almost always written off as a loss," she said. "The biggest problem, though, is getting anything sorted out. It takes weeks to get a response to an email. Everything is so complex and takes so long."

Perceived complexity

For many people who have attended the RTB in the past, that perceived complexity makes the experience very daunting.

James O'Toole, a resident of Tathony House apartment complex, who, along with every other resident in the block, was served an eviction notice as the landlord intends to sell the property, said the process of going to the RTB was "very stressful".

"Even going into the RTB, the adjudicators, the lawyer for your landlord, these are all very professional people who are used to arguing these things day in and day out," he said.

Legal professionals who specialise in tenancy law said a lot of the time, landlords, particularly those who owned more than one property, had legal representation, while the tenants did not.

Gary Daly, a solicitor who does not normally represent parties at the RTB, but who often deals with cases post-RTB determination order, said one

row interpretation of the Act, such as my client's having lived in the property all their lives."

A spokesman for the RTB said it had introduced a number of measures to address the issues highlighted in the audit, as well as those availing of its dispute resolution service.

'Improved analysis'

The board will also review how it reports on processing and waiting times to provide "an improved analysis of how long a dispute takes" and has established a "closer relationship" with the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) to help support tenants in rent arrears and those landlords who had tenants with rent arrears.

For Mr Mitchell, however, these steps don't help him as he faces homelessness. He is overholding on the property, while discussions and legal proceedings continue. The landlord, Mill Street Projects, did not respond to a request for comment.

While the prospect of having to find someplace else to move was frightening in itself, the biggest stress had been the back and forth for half a decade, he said.

"It's been such a long time since this all started. You're spending all that time waiting for another letter to come in the door. It's constant stress. I'm just going to have to stay until I'm kicked out, I don't know what else to do."

Seven men charged with attempted murder

Seven men have been charged with the attempted murder of a senior police officer in Co Tyrone in February.

Det Chief Insp John Caldwell (below) was shot multiple times on February 22nd at a sports complex in Omagh, Co Tyrone, where he coached a youth football team.

Eleven people were arrested last Friday in connection with the case. Four of them, two men and two women, were released on Saturday pending a report to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.

On Saturday night, the Police Service of Northern Ireland said seven men had



“Det Chief Insp Caldwell was shot a number of times in the presence of his young son”

been charged with attempted murder.

It said in a statement that "two of the men, aged 38 and 45, have also been charged with membership of a proscribed organisation, namely the IRA. Three of the men, aged 28, 33 and 47, have also been charged with preparation of terrorist acts".

All seven men are expected to appear before Dungannon Magistrates Court via video link today.

Critically ill

Det Chief Insp Caldwell was shot a number of times in the presence of his young son as he put football into the boot of his car after coaching a youth football team in Omagh. He spent weeks in a critically ill in Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry and suffered life-changing injuries.

The PSNI has said it believes the New IRA dissident republican group was responsible for the attack.

Det Chief Insp Caldwell made his first public appearance since the incident last week, when he was a guest at a garden party in Hillsborough Castle attended by King Charles and Queen Camilla. -PA

Crematorium raises funds for charity by recycling metals

LOUISE WALSH

A crematorium has donated more than €30,000 to local charities from recycling prosthetic limbs and other metals collected from the ashes of the deceased.

Metal hips, knees, surgical plates and pins and teeth fillings as well as the coffin handles are all separated from the ashes of the deceased and sent to a company in the Netherlands.

Most crematoria that used to bury the metal or sell it on to local metal dealers are now collecting and sending the bulk metal to Orthometals which have 25 years' experience "recycling" and deal with 1,300 crematoria in 32 countries.

Lakelands Funeral Home

€31,000

Amount a crematorium in Cavan has donated to local charities by collecting metal body parts

and Crematorium has donated more than €30,000 to the local hospice and palliative care service in Cavan, which it has collected from the donation of metal body parts in the past five years.

Owner Declan Finnegan, who has operated the crematorium for the past eight years, proudly advertises the generous donations from the environmentally friendly process inside the building. "We have a state-of-the-art filtration system here which is regularly checked by the local county council environment team to ensure no toxins are released into the atmosphere," he said. "After a cremation, all organ-

ic bone fragments, which are very brittle, as well as non-consumed metal items are transferred into the back of the cremation chamber and into a stainless steel cooling pan.

"All non-consumed items, like metal from clothing, hip joints and bridge work are separated from the cremated remains. This separation is accomplished through visual inspection as well as using a strong magnet for smaller and minute metallic objects. Items such as dental gold and silver are non-recyclable and are commingled in with the cremated remains.

Collection

"We collect all of these metals and, once a year, a representative from Orthometals in the Netherlands comes to collect the metal. Once it is back at its plant and sorted, it sends us a breakdown of the metals as well as 80 per cent of the value of it."

"Those proceeds have been given to the local hospice and the palliative care service since we started recycling five years ago. It has amounted to €31,000."

Among the metals which were recycled last year were 35kg of cobalt chrome, 1kg of stainless steel, 12kg of titanium, 1kg each of zinc and aluminium, 200kg of ferro metals about 95,000g each of gold and silver.

Although the various metals are recycled into many different applications, the metals derived from prosthetics, cobalt chrome, titanium and high-grade stainless steel are generally sold by the smelters to the automotive industry, or are used as additives by larger smelters due to their high grade nature.

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Judge sentences teenager to life for woman's murder

Youth, aged 14 at time of the attack, will have case reviewed after 13 years

Court told teenager tried to steal a phone from another victim and took out a knife

EOIN REYNOLDS

The 17-year-old who stabbed Urantsetseg Tserendorj to death has been detained for life with a review after 13 years following Government statements that legislation will provide new sentencing structures for juveniles convicted of serious crimes.

The teenager's sentencing had been delayed after the trial judge Mr Justice Tony Hunt noted that there was no provision in legislation to allow judges to suspend any portion of the defendant's sentence.

He said the judge reviewing his case after 13 years would therefore be left with an "all or nothing" approach to either release the child without any way to incentivise good behaviour, or keep him in detention indefinitely.

Mr Justice Hunt said yesterday that he was "encouraged" by what he had heard in the media from statements made in the Dáil and by the Department of Justice.

"I have come to the view that I can derive some encouragement from ministerial and department statements since the last sentencing hearing in this unfortunate case," Mr Justice Hunt said. "It has to be emphasised, the limit of my function is to raise issues where they touch on the business of this court."

He said that the precise details of the reforms are a matter for the Oireachtas and added: "It is proper to have respect for these pronouncements as having substance; there will be a fully considered sentence structure for unfortunate cases such as this."

When the Children Act was drawn up, Mr Justice Hunt said it is possible that very young people committing serious offences was not considered.

"Just because they are a small number, they are important and significant and there needs to be a proper way in which the interests of the offender and society... can be synthesised at all stages of the process."

While saying that he knows he is "not supposed to" notice such things, the judge said it is hard not to be aware and he is going to take on board what has been said. The 13-year review, he said, will be carried out by a judge of the Central Criminal Court. In the years up to then, Mr Justice Hunt also ordered a series of probation reports leading to the final report on January 11th, 2034.

The defendant will be able to apply for parole after 12 years and Mr Justice Hunt said the review system does not preclude him from applying for parole. He added that this potential overlap is something the Oireachtas should consider when legislating for juveniles sentenced for serious crimes.

Mr Justice Hunt said that one of the "terrible realities" of the case is that the defendant will still only be 28 years old when his review comes up and he will potentially be released. "If he enjoys ordinary good fortune he will have many good years in front of him, even with all that behind him," the judge said.

Mr Justice Hunt said the youth had done well in detention and has excellent family support. He will, however, require attention from the authorities while in detention and his "rehabilitation is something he has to work on". He said that was the reason for the series of probation reports leading up to 2034.

Mr Justice Hunt sentenced the teenager to concurrent three and two-year sentences for five other offences committed on the same day he stabbed Ms Tserendorj and for the theft of a bicycle.

All sentences are backdated to when the 17-year-old first went into custody in January 2021.

The accused, who was 14 years old at the time of the offence and cannot be named because he is a minor, had denied

the murder of Ms Tserendorj but had pleaded guilty to her manslaughter on January 29th, 2021. He was found guilty of her murder by a jury last year following two trials. The first trial ended with a jury disagreement.

Ms Tserendorj was stabbed in the neck on a walkway between George's Dock and Custom House Quay at the IFSC, Dublin on January 20th, 2021, after the teenager attempted to rob her.

Ms Tserendorj was declared dead on the evening of January 29th, 2021, because of a lack of oxygen to the brain caused by a stab wound no bigger than 1.5cm that partially severed her carotid artery. Ms Tserendorj, who worked in Dublin's city centre, had moved to Ireland with her husband and two children approximately 15 years before she was killed.

She was making her way home on foot on the night when she was approached by the teenager who asked for money. When she said she did not have any money, he stabbed her. When gardai went to the defendant's home the following day in response to a report of a stolen bicycle, the teenager told them that he was responsible for stabbing Ms Tserendorj.

At a sentencing hearing last year Detective Sergeant Brendan Casey said both of the teenager's parents were chronic drug addicts. His grandmother gave evidence of him becoming involved in the abuse of drugs from an early age.

66

I lost my beloved wife and our children lost their mother. My health has been affected by severe mental difficulties and I have heart problems

Det Sgt Casey said that the teenager had 31 previous convictions, including two attempted robberies and five robberies, one production of an article, one assault causing harm, and a number of drug offences.

Ms Tserendorj's husband, Ulambayar Surenkhor, wrote a statement to the court saying that he and his family had lived happily until "that terrible tragedy".

"I lost my beloved wife and our children lost their mother. My health has been affected by severe mental difficulties and I have heart problems. I get unstable, lose my temper, and I just want to scream. She was kind and soft like my mother, and we were each other's first loves. That horrible day, due to the loss of her mother, my daughter is in deep emotional turmoil," said Mr Surenkhor.

On the same night as the murder, the teenager attempted to steal a phone from another woman, Tayo Odelade. Det Sgt Casey said she resisted and swore at him, to which the teenager said he was only messing. Ms Odelade replied that he was not messing and again cursed at him. He got offended and said: "That could have been a lot worse for you." He then took out a knife from under his jacket which she said was about five inches long. She apologised and he put the knife away and left.

The teenager was also charged with an incident that occurred in a Spar shop on O'Connell Street at 5.30am on the same date. Det Sgt Casey said the teenager went to the till with sweets behind his back and said to the shopkeeper: "I have a f**king blade, what are you going to do about it?" Another employee arrived and the accused left the shop, but as he was leaving, he said: "You

don't know who you're dealing with."

The shopkeeper, John Caulwell, made a victim impact statement in which he said: "I was petrified and feared for my safety. When he left, I was trembling, all I could think about was that I could be stabbed. I am 16 years in my business and this is the only time I thought I might be killed."

There was a final charge against the teenager of stealing a bicycle two days earlier on January 18th at Talbot Place. Det Sgt Casey said that a woman, Yu Yu Son, was working late and she was about to get on her bike when she was approached by the teenager, who put one hand on the handlebars and one hand on the seat. He used the bike to push her, injuring her legs, before he pulled the bike from her, got on it and cycled away. Both her legs were bruised and very sore. She recognised him later and recorded an image which she shared with gardai.

In her victim impact statement, Ms Son said: "I leave the light on when I go to bed, and whenever I see teenagers in black clothing and hats, I get afraid. I'm afraid to chat face to face with strangers."

As part of the mitigation by defence, the teenager's grandmother read out a letter to the court, which she said she had written to give a glimpse into the child he was.

"I am not a mother who sees no wrong in a child. I never had anything to do with crime and I don't condone criminal behaviour," she said.

She said her grandson used to be sports mad, excelling at hurling and boxing. She said he changed when his birth mother introduced herself to him in the street and when she did not get what she wanted from him, his mother said she would harm herself. The witness said that her grandson never returned to boxing or GAA after that and began to get into trouble at school.

"His new friends were all involved in stealing bikes and using the money to buy drugs. I got many agencies involved but nothing worked. He would be awake at night crying and made three suicide attempts," she said.

She said that Ms Tserendorj has become part of her prayers, and the pain of watching Ms Tserendorj's husband "brought me to my knees".

Following yesterday's sentencing hearing, former Dublin mayor Hazel Chu spoke outside court on behalf of Ms Tserendorj's family, with the deceased's husband Ulambayar Surenkhor by her side.

She said: "We just wanted to say a big thank you to Mr Justice Hunt and to the prosecution and also to the Garda liaison office. As you know it is two years since Urantsetseg Tserendorj died and today her family and her husband would like to thank the public for their support."

If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this article, you can freephone the Samaritans 24 hours a day for confidential support at 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org.

Alternatively, the contact information for a range of mental health supports is available at mentalhealthireland.ie/get-support.

In the case of an emergency, or if you or someone you know is at risk of suicide or self-harm, dial 999/112.

Urantsetseg Tserendorj's husband, Ulambayar Surenkhor



66 **She has been my soulmate and my other half because we have been together so long**



Urantsetseg Tserendorj was a figurehead in the Mongolian community in Ireland

'Without her, everything is dark and heavy'



Shauna Bowers

Father is determined to fulfil his wife's dream that their daughter studies at university

Ulambayar Surenkhor was 18 when he met the love of his life, Urantsetseg (Urnaa) Tserendorj. The pair were taking part in a school table tennis championship, in their home province of Khuvsgul in Mongolia.

Ms Tserendorj, who was known as Urnaa to her friends and family, was very sporty, according to her husband, although it was her smile that first caught his eye.

"We have known each other since high school. We've been together for nearly 30 years. It's been a long time," he says, with the assistance of a court-appointed interpreter. "In school there was a table tennis championship, and we met. I was on the champion men's side, and she was on the girls' side. There was training we were doing, and we met. In that time, we were meeting as friends. And then afterwards, we had a conversation, and we became a couple."

For both of them, Mr Surenkhor says, it was their first love. Sitting in a coffee shop in north Dublin, he smiles faintly at the memory. "It's a very, very precious thing. That's how I feel. It's not like a second, third love. We just met and that was it."

Married in 1997, their story came to an abrupt and unexpected end two years ago. Ms Tserendorj, who was 49 at the time, was stabbed in the neck as she walked home from Dublin's financial district, where she worked as a cleaner, on January 20th, 2021.

She was taken to the Mater Hospital, where she underwent emergency surgery and remained in a critical condition before she died on February 3rd. In November, a 16-year-old boy, who cannot be named because he is a minor, was found guilty of her murder, following a retrial at the Central Criminal Court. He was sentenced to life in prison with a review after 13 years

following Government statements that legislation will provide new sentencing structures for juveniles convicted of serious crimes.

The time since his wife's murder has been very difficult, Mr Surenkhor says, adding that he feels like he lost a part of himself when she died.

He misses her every day. The death of her smiling presence constantly takes him by surprise. The world feels smaller, and Ireland, a little bit darker. "The reason I adore her, she [was] very friendly. And also, very similar to my mom as a person. Her smile, obviously; she has a cheeky smile. It really attracted me," he says. "She has been my soulmate and my other half because we have been together so long."

He hopes to help her achieve the dream of attending university. "Now it is really, really important for me to let my daughter study here and fulfil her mother's wishes. That's crucially important for me," Mr Surenkhor says.

"Urnaa, her dream was for

her to study in Trinity College. That is my daughter's dream, too. I'm going to try. I will be there for her 24/7. That is my duty as her dad. But also, for her mother's dream."

While Ms Tserendorj was a leader in her family, she was also a figurehead in the Mongolian community in Ireland. She was a PE teacher in her home country before moving here and she decided to set up a local Mongolian volleyball league. The teams have been very successful in recent months, having placed in the European championships.

Their success, Mr Surenkhor says, is part of her legacy. "I really think she's watching us from the sky, and I'm sure that she is happy to hear that," he says.

Her involvement in the Mongolian community meant they rallied around Mr Surenkhor following his wife's death. They gathered in Smithfield square for a memorial for Urnaa soon after she died. "Dublin is a small city and I can feel our Mongolian community is very nice and friendly to each other. It is very close," he says.

Ms Tserendorj was connected to the Irish community, too. She worked as a cleaner for a variety of businesses, and for almost 15 years she cleaned Mary O'Brien's house. The Irish woman says, however, that she was so much more than her cleaner.

"I was heartbroken. I lost a part of my family when Urnaa went. From almost the get go, we got on. We just hit it off,"

she says. "Urnaa was so valuable to us. It's not just that she was a cleaner. I have a son on the autistic spectrum and Urnaa could nearly get around him better than we could. She was so patient and kind."

Every Christmas, Ms Tserendorj would arrive at Ms O'Brien's house with a "big bag of gifts", she adds. "She would bring these chocolates that she knew I loved, even though I never told her. She just knew."

That kindness is one of the traits her family remembers most, according to her older sister Undrakh Tserendorj, who travelled to Ireland from the US for the trial.

Her sister was not just a sibling, but a friend. "We were very close to each other."

There were eight brothers and sisters in the family. But now, she says, "we are just seven".

Describing Urnaa as a "brilliant sister", she adds that she was creative, calm and an excellent cook. "If I was cleaning, I'd like to do a little one, but she would always like to do a deep clean," she laughs.

One of the hardest parts of losing her sister was when she travelled to be with her in the hospital before her death. Her mother had wanted to attend too, but it was during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and the journey from Mongolia would have required 73 hours of travel across three countries, meaning she was unlikely to arrive in Ireland before her daughter died.

"It was very traumatic when we had to turn off the ventilator," her sister says, beginning to cry at the memory. Returning to Ireland for the trial was also difficult, she adds. "I keep thinking I'm going to see her, but I can't see her any more. She's not here any more."

The guilty verdict felt like justice, the family say. They thanked gardai, the court system, the Director of Public Prosecutions and President Michael D Higgins, who met the family on the one-year anniversary of her death. They also extended thanks to the Irish people and the Mongolian community who supported them during their time of need.

During the week of the retrial, Mr Surenkhor received messages from those in Ireland saying they were "thinking of you", while the Mongolian community gathered on the Friday evening after the verdict had been delivered to lay flowers at the IFSC in her memory.

Despite being happy the trial has concluded, they say it doesn't bring Ms Tserendorj back.

"I'm happy there was justice, however my sister has passed away so I can never be really happy. I will miss her forever," Undrakh says. "I hope they will do something about this kind of thing [violence] to stop it happening again."

Mr Surenkhor echoes this sense of loss. "The whole ground of the world has turned around and landed on me. Without her, everything is dark and heavy."

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on his wines

AOIFE McELWAIN
cooks outdoors

EPA predicts Ireland will fall far short of its climate targets

Country's 29 per cent cut in emissions to fall well below 51 per cent goal

Agriculture, industry, electricity and transport set to exceed national ceilings

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN
Environment Editor

Ireland will achieve a reduction of only 29 per cent in its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, far short of a legally binding target of 51 per cent that is core to the Government's climate policy, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) latest projections.

Almost all sectors are on a trajectory to exceed their national ceilings – including agriculture, industry, electricity and transport.

The first two carbon budgets (2021-2025; 2026-2030) designed to impose limits on carbon arising from economic activity and households "will not be met, and by a significant margin", it predicts in its starkest annual outline of projections out to 2040.

Reaching the 2030 target "now requires implementing policies that deliver emission reductions across all sectors of the economy in the short term", it warns – including firming up existing plans, enhancing implementation and introducing a more ambitious 2024 climate plan to close large gaps.

"Ireland needs to fully implement the actions in the 2023 climate action plan that have been defined; firm up the actions that currently don't have associated policies and measures, such as diversification in agriculture; and identify and implement further policies and measures," its analysis, published today, finds.

Time horizon

These projections show that strong economic activity, population growth and associated energy demand "are eroding the increased ambition in the 2023 climate action plan," said EPA senior manager Stephen Treacy. "This underlines the urgency of moving to an economy and society powered by renewable energy sources.

"The longer we wait, the longer it will be before we realise the benefits as the time horizon for achievement of national and EU commitments is getting ever shorter."

EPA modelling shows

planned climate policies and measures, if fully implemented, could deliver up to 29 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 compared with 2018; a reduction of 4 per cent each year from 2022 to 2030. This is insufficient to meet requirements of the Climate Act.

Ireland has committed to a 51 per cent reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. However, two scenarios modelled by the EPA outline how in fact the amount of greenhouse gas emitted will be exceeded by between 24 and 34 per cent. If existing measures, which were adopted and resourced up until the end of 2021, are implemented, the scenario shows the biggest shortfall in terms of meeting our climate budget. If more ambitious measures are adopted, such as those outlined in the 2023 climate plan, there will be a better outcome, albeit short of what is required.

All sectors, except residential buildings, are projected to underperform relative to the sectoral emissions ceilings set out last year by the Government. The agriculture, industry and electricity sectors are set to be the furthest from their sectoral ceiling in 2030.

EPA director general Laura Burke said: "Ireland will miss its 2030 climate targets unless all sectors of the economy deliver emission reductions in the short term and sustain this delivery into the future.

"We're in the third year of the first carbon budget period, with only seven more years left to 2030. A continued lack of delivery of large-scale practical actions to decarbonise activities in all sectors will see us exceed our carbon budgets.

"More detail is needed on the how and when of the delivery of these actions. Ireland needs to grasp the nettle of climate action so it can realise the significant opportunities and social and economic co-benefits for people, communities and business that can be delivered through innovation and decarbonisation."

→ **Cracks in climate policy becoming clear: Analysis, page 3**



In full Bloom Gardens on show

Visitors to the flower-selling section of Bloom 2023: the gardening event at the Phoenix Park in Dublin runs throughout the June Bank Holiday weekend.

Report: page 3.
See gallery at irishtimes.com/photography

Photograph: Alan Betson/
The Irish Times

Concern over presence of US naval ship in Irish waters

CONOR GALLAGHER

An advanced US naval ship which has been operating in Irish-controlled waters for four months with its transmitter turned off is causing concern among Irish defence officials.

The Virginia Ann, which is fitted with equipment capable of subsea operations, yesterday left Cork, where it was being re-supplied, and is sailing west. It is operated by the US Naval Facilities Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Centre or

Navfac-EXWC, a section of the US navy responsible for maintenance and installation of sub-surface infrastructure, including undersea surveillance systems.

Built in 2015, the Virginia Ann is officially classified as an offshore supply ship but it is understood to be capable of advanced sub-surface operations, including the deployment of deep-sea divers. In 2020, it was purchased by Navfac-EXWC which, according to its website, oversees "seafloor engineer-

ing, moorings, shore-based hyperbaric facilities, and underwater cable structures".

Since January, the Virginia Ann has been sailing back and forward between the waters off Co Cork and the very southern tip of the UK, mostly with its Automatic Identification System (AIS) turned off. Vessels, particularly military vessels, often turn off their AIS if attempting to conceal their movements.

Maintaining an AIS signal is considered best practice from a safety point of view. However, it

is not generally a legal requirement and there are several reasons ships may not display one.

Hidden presence

The task of the Virginia Ann remains unclear but its lengthy and sometimes hidden presence in the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has caused some concern among Irish military officials.

The Irish Times asked a naval expert to examine a photo of the ship taken in Cork this week. They said the visible

equipment indicated it was involved in manned diving operations and possibly subsea cable surveys or repairs.

"It's not that it poses a national security threat necessarily. It's more that it shows our inability to monitor what's happening in our own backyard, whether it's the Russians or Americans or whoever," said one military source.

Security sources said the ship may be involved in efforts to upgrade a Cold War-era underwater surveillance system

used to detect Russian submarines. The Department of Foreign Affairs said the vessel visited Cobh "to change crew and receive supplies" and permission had been sought from the US embassy. The department did not respond to queries about the ship's activity in the EEZ.

Neither Navfac-EXWC or the US department of defence responded to queries.

→ **Varadkar says Nato or EU defence plan is 'real issue' for Ireland: page 2**

Antidepressant prescriptions for under-15s up 130% since 2012

SHAUNA BOWERS

Antidepressant prescriptions for children aged 15 and under have increased by more than 130 per cent over the past decade, according to new figures from the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The figures have prompted concerns from representatives in the sector, who say there is a "growing crisis" in being able to meet the needs of children and young people seeking help.

Figures obtained by The Irish Times show that a total of 6,541 prescriptions for antidepressants were issued for children up to 15 years old in 2012. This figure has risen significantly since then, reaching 15,113 in 2022.

The increase is most pronounced in teenagers aged 12 to 15 years old, who saw a 150 per cent rise in the number of pre-

scriptions issued, from 4,454 in 2012 to 12,801 in 2022.

The increase among 0 to 11 year-olds was much smaller at 10.7 per cent, rising from 2,087 to 2,312 across that time period.

The gender divide of children under 15 being prescribed antidepressants was almost equal between boys and girls. Overall, across all age groups, there was a 35 per cent rise in prescriptions for antidepressants between 2012 and 2022, rising from 2,817,201 to 3,828,149.

Mike Mansfield, director of communications and fundraising at youth mental health charity Jigsaw, said services for young people were "in a very tricky spot at the moment".

"Parents have very limited options because they're hearing that Camhs [Child and Adult Mental Health Services] is in a bad state so that's kind of

not an option for many of them. The first port of call is they go to a GP, and the GP's hands can be tied," Mr Mansfield said.

"They think there is no point directing my client to Camhs because it's going to be 18 months to two years. There mightn't be a service like Jigsaw in the area. So often the only option is the prescription pad."

Fiona Coyne, chief executive of Mental Health Reform, the coalition of organisations campaigning for changes to the mental health system, said: "We have to look at that whole array of supports that we are giving to young people to ensure that people are getting the support at the earliest possible juncture and to avoid medication if possible," she said.

→ **'Growing mental health crisis' among Ireland's young people: page 3**

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Weather

Sunny but marginally cooler in easterly winds. Dry with cloud possibly building in northwest. Highs of 21 to 24 degrees.

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World News

Ukraine: Volodymyr Zelenskyy tells summit of European leaders in Moldova that 2023 is a pivotal moment for Ukraine's ambitions to join Nato and EU: page 6

Business This Week

Banking: Government and UK banking giant NatWest move to begin a surprise sell-down of some of the shares they each hold in Permanent TSB: page 1

Housing: Demand for homes nationally is up 17 per cent on this time last year, says property site Daft.ie: page 3

Sports Friday

Golf: Getting off to a near-perfect start at the Memorial tournament in Ohio left Shane Lowry a happy man with his day's work.

Cricket: Ireland toiled fruitlessly at Lord's yesterday as Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett both notched up half-centuries for England.

HSE to look at seven-day working as hospital discharges fall at weekends

Bigger hospitals discharge average of 606 patients during week and 202 at weekends

Figures are first to shed light on variable rates of patient discharge across the week

PAUL CULLEN
Health Editor

The Health Service Executive (HSE) is to undertake a fresh investigation of seven-day working in the health service as figures show the number of patients discharged from hospitals plummets at weekends.

Hospitals discharge about three times as many patients during the week as they do at

weekends, the analysis shows.

In response, a new team comprising former HSE manager Gerry O'Dwyer and other officials has been tasked with investigating the scope for greater seven-day working.

The group will look at the performance of hospitals in discharging patients and seek to establish how activity levels can be raised at weekends.

However, health unions at-

tending the recent meeting of the HSE emergency department taskforce gave the proposal a cool reception and demanded representation on the group.

The bigger model-4 hospitals discharge an average of 606 patients during the week compared with 202 over the weekend, according to HSE data.

Smaller model 3 hospitals discharge an average of 518 patients during the week compared with 181 over the weekend. Discharges during the week tend to be lowest on Mondays and highest on Fridays.

The figures, presented at last week's meeting of the HSE emergency department taskforce, are the first to shed light on the variable rates of patient

discharge in hospitals across different periods in the week.

HSE chief executive Bernard Gloster has been stressing the need for more seven-day working in the health service since he started in the post last March.

Less than half

Weekend discharges fall to less than half the normal weekday rate in all hospitals and to less than one-quarter in Limerick, St Vincent's and Mayo, an analysis of the data by the Irish Patients' Association shows.

Weekend discharges at Portlaoise, the best-performing hospital, are 46 per cent of the weekday rate, according to analysis. But weekend discharges at Portlaoise hospital in Ballina-

sloe are just 22 per cent of the weekday figure.

"Delaying discharges impacts on the safety of the patients' journeys throughout the hospital system," said Stephen McMahon, co-founder and director of the Irish Patients' Association.

The HSE report looked at hospital discharges from the start of February to the end of April for weekdays, weekends and bank holidays, for different types of hospitals.

The national average discharge during the week was 43 patients per hospital, compared with 13.7 patients at weekends and 27.9 patients on public holidays.

Beaumont Hospital and St James's Hospital had the

highest average number of discharges on weekdays and at weekends, while Wexford (which suffered a fire in its emergency department in March) and Navan had the lowest.

On bank holidays, Beaumont and the Mater hospital had the highest number of discharges, and Wexford and Mayo had the lowest.

Among model 4 hospitals, Beaumont and the Mater had the highest average discharge, and University Hospital Galway and University Hospital Waterford had the lowest.

Letterkenny University Hospital and St Luke's hospital in Kilkenny had the best discharge record for model 3 hospitals, while Wexford and Navan had the lowest figures.

Growing mental health crisis among young



Shauna Bowers

Camhs has waiting lists that can see some children waiting up to two years for an appointment

are struggling to cope more with day-to-day struggles. They're looking at what's going on around them. They're looking at everything from a macro level: global conflict, climate change, there's a famine there," he said.

Camhs has received significant scrutiny in recent years. In January of this year, Dr Susan Finnelly, the chief inspector of mental health services, said the immediate regulation of Camhs must be a "priority" due to "serious risks to the safety and wellbeing of children" engaging with it.

In 2022, meanwhile, a report by Dr Sean Maskey on south Kerry Camhs found 240 children received standard care and 46 were harmed.

Prof Elizabeth Barrett, a liaison psychiatrist in the Child and Adult Mental Health Services in Dublin and a member of the Irish Hospital Consultants' Association, said understaffing, increasing demand and under resourcing are all contributing to the pressures on the system.

"Funding levels are really, really low so I think we should ask ourselves if we're taking ourselves seriously. There's a lot of political discussion but the funding levels remain low," she said.

"So, what's happening on the ground is families are experiencing really long waiting lists. For clinicians on the ground, it's really frustrating and distressing."

"And, when there aren't

Briefs

Louth

Man arrested on suspicion of murder

Gardaí investigating the death of Catherine Henry (62), whose body was found in her Co Louth home last week, have arrested a man on suspicion of her murder.

The suspect, who is in his 20s, was arrested yesterday afternoon and was being detained in a Garda station in Louth. He was being held under the provisions of section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act, which allows for him to be questioned for up to 24 hours without charge.

Gardaí immediately suspected foul play after Mrs Henry's body was discovered with apparent injuries in the apartment on Bridge Street, Dundalk, on the night of last Wednesday week, and have been working on a definite line of inquiry from the outset of the investigation.

Those suspicions were confirmed when a post-mortem ruled out a trip, fall or accident as being the cause of her injuries and confirmed she had died after a violent attack.

CONOR LALLY

Lebanon

Court charges five over Pte Rooney killing

A Lebanese military court indicted five members of the Shia militant and political organisation Hizbullah yesterday in relation to the attack on Irish peacekeepers in South Lebanon, which killed Pte Sean Rooney and seriously injured Trooper Shane Kearney last December.

Mohammad Ayyad, who is currently in the custody of the Lebanese military, and four other defendants whose locations are currently unknown, were indicted on voluntary homicide and criminal conspiracy and will face a trial at the military court in Beirut, according to a military spokesperson.

Hizbullah did not respond to a request for comment from The Irish Times.

HANNAH MCCARTHY and CONOR GALLAGHER

Health

Call for submissions on vape ban

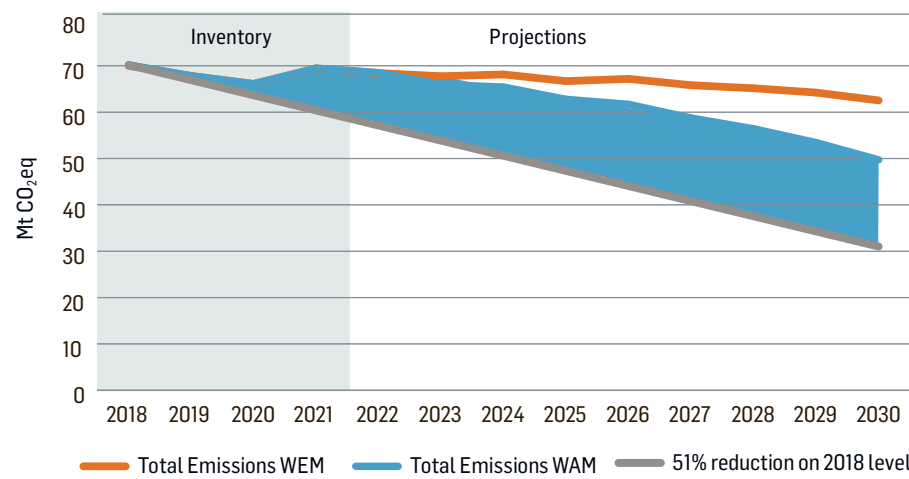
The Government is calling for submissions from the public on whether it should ban the sale of disposable vapes or introduce some form of "deposit and return" scheme for the devices.

The Department of the Environment is examining potentially banning the sale and distribution of the cheap vapes, and has sought feedback from the public and stakeholders.

The department said another option would be a "deposit and return" scheme for the disposable vapes, similar to a scheme recently set up to encourage plastic and can recycling.

JACK POWER

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (including LULUCF) under the With Existing Measures and With Additional Measures scenarios out to the year 2030



Assessment of Achievement of Sectoral Targets under the With Additional Measures scenario

Sectors	Emissions 2018 (Mt CO ₂ eq)	Projected Emissions 2030 (Mt CO ₂ eq)	Percentage Reduction 2030 vs 2018	Target Reduction 2030 vs 2018
Electricity	10.3	3.9	-62%	-75%
Transport	12.2	7.2	-41%	-50%
Buildings (Residential)	7.1	3.7	-48%	-40%
Buildings (Comm and Public)	1.5	0.8	-50%	-45%
Industry	7.0	6.2	-11%	-35%
Agriculture	23.4	19.0	-19%	-25%
Other ²⁰	2.2	1.7	-21%	-50%
LULUCF (no ceiling currently)	6.3	7.2	15%	N/A
Total with LULUCF	70	49.7	-29%	-51%

Cracks in climate policy becoming clear



Kevin O'Sullivan
Analysis

Failure to curb emissions is going to get even more difficult and costly

Whatever way one looks at the latest EPA projections on Ireland's likely greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over coming years, they highlight a failure to address a problem that is quickly going to get even more difficult – and more costly.

The political implications of this will be far-reaching, even for the current Government in

the last months of office. Hardening divisions between the bigger parties – Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil – and the Greens over EU nature restoration law show how fraught political action on the climate/biodiversity front can become, even when nature restoration is a win-win in species/habitat enhancement and applying nature-based solutions to our emissions problem.

Slow implementation

Cracks in climate policy in particular are emerging; notably poor and slow implementation of what on paper are ambitious targets with measures backed by timelined actions. This is graphically illustrated in the latest EPA modelling, which is getting more robust. Its annual projections are an estimate of what emission levels are likely to be in future years. They are based on key assumptions such as economic growth, fuel prices and government policy.

Almost all sectors of the economy will fail to meet 2030

targets. Carbon budgets supposed to impose discipline through legally-adopted ceilings are highly unlikely to do their job. Ireland is set to reduce its emissions by 29 per cent, instead of 51 per cent committed to, in a likely best case scenario – at a time when most wealthy EU member

Almost all sectors of the economy will fail to meet 2030 targets

states like us are already on a sustained downward trajectory with the benefits that this brings. Carbon budgets are not about spending but apply limits on the amount of carbon every sector can generate over a set period. The overall limits (defined in terms of million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent) are set out by the Climate Change Advisory Council and applied by the Government in two, five-yearly carbon budgets that run up to 2030. As the EPA

makes clear, the combination of sustained economic growth, surging energy demand and a rising population are making it extremely difficult to keep the lid on associated emissions.

It applies two modelling scenarios – "with existing measures" (WEM) and "with additional measures" (WAM).

WEM is based on measures currently implemented and actions committed to by Government and in place since the end of 2021 with required resourcing and legislation. For example, it includes carbon tax increasing annually and reaching €100 per tonne by 2030. WAM is a projection of future emissions based on measures in Government plans at the time projections are compiled, notably in this instance the 2023 climate plan.

This includes policies and measures included in WEM plus those in recent Government plans but not yet implemented. For example, it includes the target of 945,000 EVs on the road by 2030. While the WAM outcome is predicted (understandably) to

give a better outcome in most cases, the performance gaps in almost all scenarios are worrying. It should be acknowledged, however, that the climate plan commits to additional cuts of 9 million metric tonnes of CO₂ including unallocated savings of 5.25 million tonnes per annum for 2026-2030. Close to half those savings will come from measures likely to achieve significant reductions, such as scale-up of wind and solar energy and significant agricultural diversification.

The extent of failure, nonetheless, will be crystallised in coming weeks when the EPA issues its draft GHG inventories for 2022, indicating levels of emissions in each sector – though it should be acknowledged big decarbonisation measures such as public transport infrastructure take time in providing tangible returns.

The Government – and future administrations up to 2030 – will need to close those emissions gaps as quickly as possible.

Oysters and ice creams as visitors flock to Bloom

TIM O'BRIEN

The ice-cream vans were in full throttle early yesterday morning, preparing for the opening day of Bloom.

From 10am onwards, visitors stepped off trains and the Luas at Heuston station to queue across Seán Heuston Bridge to Parkgate Street. From there, shuttle buses took them past Áras an Uachtaráin, where President Michael D Higgins was, presumably, putting the finishing touches to his near half-hour opening address.

At number one in the nursery village, Kilmurray Nursery of Gorey, Co Wexford, was doing a roaring trade in plant sales – the plants being based in environmentally correct "100 per cent peat-free compost". Paul Woods, whose family run the business, was chuffed, having just taken a gold medal for Kilmurray pollinator garden display.

Nearby queues for cones began to form at "the Ice-Cream Experience". Large numbers of schoolchildren were to be disappointed: "There are loads



■ The Dawn to Dusk Garden by designer Colm Carthy at Bloom; right: the First 5 Garden of Wonder and Discovery, designed by Liat and Oliver Schurmann. PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAN BETSON

of ice-cream vans," noted one youngster.

Much interest was expressed in the Marie Keating Foundation Catching Cancer early garden designed by Robert Moore.

The garden design consists of a charred boardwalk, representative of the cancer journey, which "floats" through dense seasonal planting. The planting is intended to reflect the beau-



ty, hope, and positivity of the garden, and to be in stark contrast to the charred timber. The design secured a gold medal for its creator Robert Moore.

Claire McGonnell from Cork and Briggita Curtin from the Burren Smokehouse in Co Clare were enjoying oysters at the Oyster Bar. "I just love the oysters... they come from Gal-

way, from some of the most pristine waters in the world," said Ms Curtin. In the food village, the President was delivering a speech on the biodiversity crisis and climate change. His voice faltered as he spoke of the people of the Horn of Africa who create so little of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, but who are suffering the worst effects of the climate crisis. He criticised those among the

"most powerful" who do the least to combat the crisis. But he also praised "the long-term thinking" of those who planted gardens for future generations. He commended those who did what was in their ability to combat the climate crisis, adding, "But you know that, you are all gardeners."

A full list of Bloom winners is at bordbiabloom.com

Changes in antidepressant prescriptions for children by HSE service areas between 2012 and 2022

Carlow/Kilkenny: +115%	Mayo: +15%
Cavan/Monaghan: +299%	Meath: +76%
Clare: -7.75%	North Cork: +163%
Donegal: +149%	North Dublin: +162%
Dublin North Central: +25%	North Lee: +119%
Dublin South City: +47%	North Tipperary/East Limerick: +188%
Dublin South East: +274%	North West Dublin: +121%
Dublin South West: +190%	Roscommon: +89%
Dublin West: +197%	Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan: +98%
Dún Laoghaire: +83%	South Lee: +88%
Galway: +225%	South Tipperary: +46%
Kerry: +196%	Waterford: +375%
Kildare/West Wicklow: +63%	West Cork: +348%
Laois/Offaly: +262%	Wexford: +168%
Limerick: +68%	Wicklow: +132%
Longford/Westmeath: +121%	
Louth: +65%	