



FREE INSIDE Guide to
the best summer reads

SEE PAGES 50 & 51

'GARDAI MUST INVESTIGATE ST JOHN OF GOD CHIEF'

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

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

By **Michael O'Farrell**

INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

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

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

'Gardaí should be investigating that with

Turn to Page 8 >>



DJ Carey conned
woman by
saying he had
'same cancer'

PAGES 6 & 7

Harvey Norman[®]

YOUR TECHNOLOGY SPECIALISTS

UP TO **36 MONTHS**
FLEXIBLE PAYMENTS*¹
ON TECHNOLOGY

NO DEPOSIT

For full terms and conditions visit
harveynorman.ie/finance

'Order's Provincial needs to step aside'

» From Page One

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Finlay – a former CEO of children's charity, Barnardos – said that, in his experience of the St John of God order, 'money matters to them almost more than anything else.' He called on Br Forkan to step down immediately from any role involving services to vulnerable children and adults.

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

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

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

director of those under any circumstances.'

Asked if the HSE should insist Br Forkan be removed, Mr Finlay replied: 'If necessary yes, but I think the board, in the first instance, should address that, if they have the wherewithal to do that.'

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

'Forkan's role needs to be investigated'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

investigation into Donatus Forkan's role in sending and tolerating Brother Aidan's presence in Malawi is a necessary step after the court ruling. This is essential not only to clarify responsibility but also to draw structural consequences and improve systems for child protection,' the charity said.

KNH added: 'Religious institutions, like all other institutions, must never evade responsibility or



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



ROME 2006

GREETING: Br Donatus Forkan meets Pope Benedict



DUBLIN 2010

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



MALAWI 2010



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

DUBLIN 2016

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

WILLIAM Forkan is a farmer's son from Kinaffe, just outside Swinford in Co. Mayo, who entered the St John of God order in 1960.

From then on, he became known as Br Donatus Forkan.

On the very same day another man, James Clohessy – an engineer's son from Limerick – was also professed. He became known as Br Aidan Clohessy.

Br Forkan spent 21 years as a missionary in Korea before returning home to become Provincial in Ireland in 1992.

The following year, he dispatched Br Aidan to Malawi.

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

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

Those accusations would soon mount up substantially.

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

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

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

By Michael O'Farrell

INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

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

Clohessy wasn't his only problem.

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

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

to

'A deeply engrained culture of collusion'

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

She also warned Br Forkan of a 'deeply engrained culture of collusion' within his order.

This, she told him, 'makes it almost impossible for the truth about these matters to be dealt with'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Seek support and talk with the authorities'

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

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

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

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

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

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

Instead, Br Forkan posted a brief

remain silent. Instead, they must implement effective child protection systems. All known abuse cases must be fully investigated and published, regardless of the perpetrator's position or rank.

'Those who have failed – whether through active cover-up or neglect – must be held accountable. Abuse must never be dealt with internally. External, independent bodies are needed to investigate and monitor incidents.'

Clohessy's victims this weekend said more investigations and prosecutions are required.

Abuse survivor Joe Devine said Clohessy should be prosecuted for the abuse he committed in Malawi.

'There should be a trial, the same way there was a trial here in Ireland,' he said. Mr Devine's wife Sally also said Br Forkan should be investigated. 'Although I know he wasn't actually carrying out the abuse, he was complicit in allowing it to go on.'

The State child and family agency Tusla said it could not comment on any individual case. However, a spokesperson said:

Another survivor, Patsy Carville, criticised the Church authorities.

'It's the Catholic Church you have to blame,' he said. He [Clohessy] was told not to go near children and he was there for 20 years. It's a disgrace nobody checked up on him,' he said.

Victim Wayne Farrell said the abuse of children in Africa was 'horrendous'.

'I think justice should be done for them here and I'd like to hear something from the Irish Government on it,' he said.

Another victim, Gerry Quinn, said the role of Br Forkan needed to be exposed.

'He needs to be exposed and the people who backed him, they need to be exposed as well. That monster [Clohessy] was left roam free over there.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Instead, Br Forkan posted a brief

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

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

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

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

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

michaelofarrell@protonmail.com

Beneath the lies and abuse, lay the truth

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

BROTHER Donatus Forkan has a story he likes to tell. It involves an encounter he once had with an impoverished street girl in Mexico who was shunned by others. Feeling sorry for her, he intervened and bought the sweets she was selling.

Ever since, he has kept them on his desk as a reminder that many children are denied the 'dignity that every human being is entitled to'. I too have a memento like that. It is a simple bracelet, made by a homeless addict from Malawi called John Simwawa. He made the bracelet by stripping wires from scrapped cars and wrapping the copper around itself to form a wristband.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Think about that for a moment.

It goes to the heart of how St John of God was able to cover up

By **Michael O'Farrell**

INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

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

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

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

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

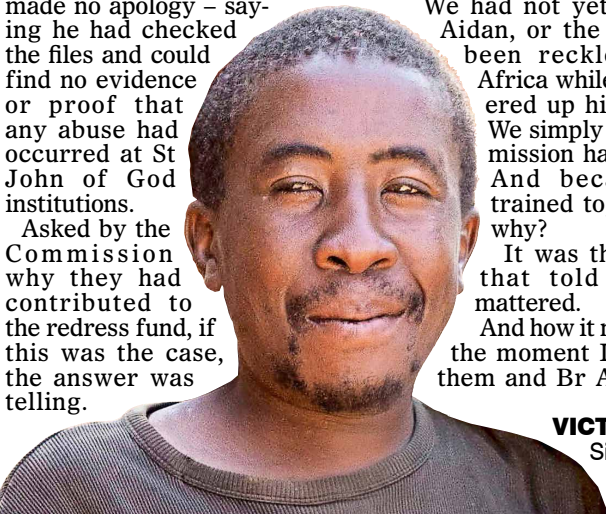
conducted by the powerful Church and political figures St John of God was able to marshal in the order's favour.

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

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

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

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



VICTIM: John Simwawa in Mzuzu, Malawi



LEGACY: Michael O'Farrell with John Simwawa in Malawi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I knew they were telling nothing but the truth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Soon Con was leading me to

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

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

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

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

He was completely unfazed.

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

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

But we had enough to publish and we did.

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

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

Other victims, some who could

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

When they came to us we listened to, and published their stories. We then directed them to gardai as a new criminal investigation of Br Aidan was launched. Then, with matters in the hands of gardai and the DPP, we watched and waited. And worked on other stories.

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

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

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

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

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

That was evident when he

FIRST REAL BREAKTHROUGH: Con Carroll, from Dublin

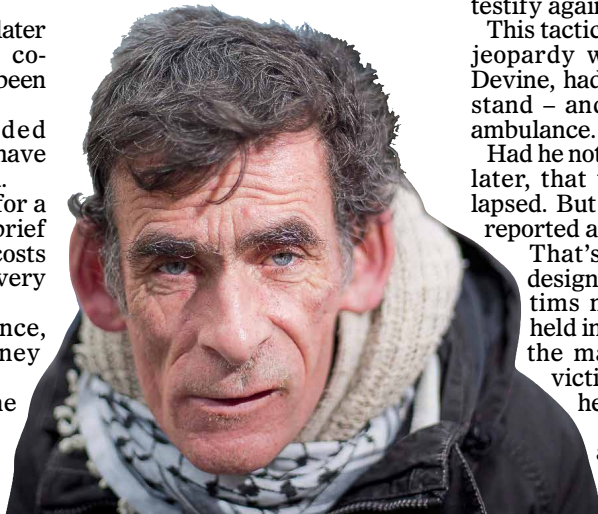
appeared before Dun Laoighaire District Court to be formally charged in February 2022.

This was the first step on the formal road to justice for his victims after decades. Finally, they could feel someone had believed them.

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

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

And still some victims were left



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

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

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

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

Ultimately, Br Aidan did not go on trial until May 2025 – eight years after we'd first exposed him.

The State wanted to run all the victims' cases together in one trial, something that would have led to a

months, the public were prevented from hearing them tell their story.

Then, for those victims involved in the first trial there was one final blow. In his first trial, Br Aidan was convicted and branded an ogre by the trial judge, Elva Duffy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

He sounded astonished that it could be so.

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

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

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

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

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

A tale of two responses and radically different attitudes to governance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

have done last week but didn't.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nowhere is this dysfunction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



By **BARRY COWAN**

FIANNA FÁIL MIDLANDS NORTH-WEST MEP