

Downsizing
to a stylish
sun-kissed
villa

Residential
Property



Resorting to just bringing everyone back to the office shows no innovation. It shows rigidity in the face of an evolving labour market. It's also quite boring

Emmet Ryan
Business



D-DAY FOR
CAMOGIE
SKORTS

Eillis Barry
Opinion
Gordon Manning
Sport

Water utility
flags critical
reforms to
meet target
on housing

Extensive list of planning and legal issues must be addressed, urges Uisce Éireann

Delays in delivering and regulating infrastructure have 'consequences'

JACK HORGAN-JONES

Uisce Éireann has warned the Government of a "critical" need for a wide range of regulatory and legislative reforms if it is to meet the "immense" task it faces and enable new housing targets.

In a document sent to the Government and seen by The Irish Times, it suggests a host of planning, legal, regulatory and consenting issues should be addressed – including fast-tracking decisions by An Bord Pleanála on strategic projects.

In a letter to Minister of State for Planning John Cummins last month, accompanied by the extensive dossier of issues, the utility warned: "The scale of the task is immense. We have flagged the need for change for some years and it is now critical, particularly in light of the revised housing targets."

It is asking for an immediate ministerial direction telling An Bord Pleanála to prioritise its strategic projects, the expansion of exempted development provisions, as well as parallel decision-making and mandatory timelines for different bodies.

It outlines the need for, among many other things, a general overhaul of waste water discharge regulations, describing the licensing regime as "complex, slow and uncertain", which it says results in "significant delays, costs and risks".

'Added months'

It says that under these regulations it is obliged to provide historical planning documents going back 50 or 60 years to the Environmental Protection Agency before an application can be lodged.

"This can (and has) added months, if not years to applications going back and forth with local authorities trying to locate documents that in all likelihood do not exist."

It flags multiple projects that have been bogged down in planning and appeals, including a pump station extension in Fingal to enable 1,200 housing units which spent 57 weeks in local authority planning, 61 weeks with An Bord

Pleanála and is now subject to judicial review.

It outlined that delays in delivering and regulating its infrastructure and operations have "direct consequences to the ability to deliver key Government policies ... including the new revised housing targets".

'Years to prepare'

It said that a single upgrade to a wastewater treatment plant can require multiple consenting processing, from planning to environmental consents and compulsory purchase orders.

"[It] may be a critical upgrade, but it will take years to prepare applications and obtain all the required consents, each of which has the potential to be challenged," Uisce Éireann wrote – even when only minor changes are being sought.

It said that legislative and policy reforms are "needed urgently". "It is incredibly difficult to deliver our goals, which are intertwined with Government goals, without legislative and policy change," it wrote.

Against the backdrop of criticism of UE by Government parties, she also said it would "welcome support and recognition" of its mission, pointing to provisions in strategic infrastructure legislation on delivering infrastructure in the common good.

"[This] is a narrative that should be central to Government communications," it wrote, particularly around megaprojects which have become bogged down, such as the Greater Dublin Drainage project and tapping the Shannon for water supply.

Among other reforms, it also wants more accountability on decision making, revision to Environmental Impact Assessment thresholds, and improved arrangements for the transfer of public land to UE. Better resourcing and training should be in place for the courts services, planning authorities and utility connection providers, it said.

In a statement, UE said after recent engagements with Government and senior officials, it was asked for proposals on potential legislative and regulatory reforms.



Century man Balbirnie ton gives Ireland platform for win over Windies

■ Andrew Balbirnie celebrates after bringing up his century during the first one-day international between Ireland and the West Indies at Clontarf Cricket Club in Dublin. Ireland won by 124 runs. PHOTOGRAPH: SAM BARNES/SPORTSFILE. REPORT: SPORT, PAGE 21

Kneecap's 'Mo Chara' charged with terrorism offence in UK

FREYA McCLEMENTS
Northern Editor

A member of the Belfast rap trio Kneecap has been charged with a terrorism offence.

Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh, who performs under the stage name Mo Chara, has been charged by the Metropolitan Police with displaying a flag in support of Hizbullah – an illegal organisation in the UK – at a gig in London last November.

In a statement yesterday evening, the force said the 27-year-old, from Belfast, had been charged via postal requisition following a counter-terrorism investigation.

He is due to appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court on June 18th.

The Met Police said Mr Ó hAnnaidh is accused of displaying a flag at the O2 Forum in Kentish Town, North London, on November 21st, 2024, "in

such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion that he is a supporter of a proscribed organisation".

"Officers from the Met's counter terrorism command were made aware on Tuesday April 22nd of an online video from the event," the force said.

■ Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh is due to appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court on June 18th

"An investigation was carried out, which led to the Crown Prosecution Service authorising the above charge."

A rap band from west Belfast who perform mostly in Irish, Kneecap are Mo Chara, DJ Próvaí and Móglai Bap – real names Liam Óg hAnnaidh, JJ Ó

Dochartaigh and Naoise Ó Cairealláin respectively.

The band are successful – they regularly perform to sell-out crowds, and an eponymous feature film won Iftas and a Bafta – but also controversial, with opponents accusing the rappers of glorifying terrorism.

Earlier this month, the Met's counter-terrorism police said it was investigating the band over two video clips from its gigs.

One appeared to show a member of the group saying "The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP", while in the other, a band member appears to shout "Up Hamas, up Hizbullah" – both banned in Britain.

Kneecap apologised and said they did not support either organisation, and the footage was being "exploited and weaponised" because of the group's opposition to the US government's stance on Gaza.

Russia funded
Kremlin activist
through Ireland

Documents detailing scheme revealed in records of Kremlin-backed legal fund

Investigation

CONOR GALLAGHER

A former senior official in Ukraine's ousted pro-Russian government sought to use Ireland to funnel Kremlin money into Kyiv and bypass international sanctions, an investigation by The Irish Times has found.

Under the plan, the money would be sent from Moscow to the United States and then to a woman in Ireland who would forward it to a prominent pro-Russian activist imprisoned by Ukrainian authorities.

Documents detailing the scheme are contained in a collection of more than 70,000 emails and records concerning the activities of a Kremlin-backed legal fund, which EU security agencies say is an extension of Russian intelligence.

The Fund for the Support and Protection of the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, known as Pravfond, was founded by the Russian government in 2012 and has close links to Russian intelligence officers.

Details of Pravfond's operations in Ireland, dating to 2013, were revealed by The Irish Times yesterday. The documents also show Ireland played a role as a waypoint for the transfer of Pravfond funds.

In April 2023 Sergey Zavorotny, a one-time adviser to Ukraine's former pro-Russia

prime minister Nikolay Azarov, requested funds from Pravfond to pay for medical bills for Elena Berezhnaya, a well-known pro-Russian activist in Ukraine. Mr Zavorotny had previously acted as press secretary to Mr Azarov, who stood down as prime minister in 2014.

Ms Berezhnaya (72) started receiving at least \$3,000 (€2,644) a year from Pravfond via Mr Zavorotny in 2022, after she was arrested by the Ukraine and accused of "high treason".

In 2023 Mr Zavorotny told Pravfond it was impossible to get funds to Ms Berezhnaya due to international sanctions. As a workaround, he proposed that money from Pravfond be transferred to Russian parents whose children were living in the US.

These funds would then be transferred via money transfer company Western Union, or another payments system, to Dublin where they would be received by a close associate of Ms Berezhnaya living in the northwest whose current whereabouts could not be traced. This woman would then get the money to Ms Berezhnaya's legal team in Kyiv. The Russian embassy in Dublin said it "firmly rejects preposterous allegations made against Pravfond" and accused The Irish Times of "libel and open Russophobia".

➔ How Russia used Ireland to evade sanctions: page 3

Weather

Today will be dry with plenty of sunshine. Highest temperatures 17-19 degrees.

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Thursday

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Rugby: The reconstituted 'A' Interprovincial Championship is a god-send for academy players in the provinces: page 21

Advertisement for Linwoods Flaxseed. The ad features a couple in outdoor gear, a bowl of oatmeal with fruit, and a packet of Linwoods Cold Milled Flaxseed. Text includes: "Make a BETTER START EVERYDAY and support your HEALTH", "PRESERVES NUTRIENTS COLD MILLED EASILY ABSORBED", "MUSCLE GROWTH", "ENERGY LEVELS", "CHOLESTEROL LEVELS", "linwoodshealthfoods.com", and "Protein contributes to the growth and maintenance of muscle mass. Magnesium contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue. Omega 3 (ALA) contributes to the maintenance of normal blood cholesterol levels. The beneficial effect is obtained with a daily intake of 2g of ALA."