

STUDENT HOUSING WHERE WILL IT COME FROM?

Agenda
Business This Week



“I think of those who put their faith in the system more than 30 years ago and went to the gardaí. I think of George Gibney’s own children who have had to live under the endless cloud of the State’s failure to deliver a verdict

Justine McCarthy
Opinion



CLASSIC CRONENBERG DONALD CLARKE ON THE SHROUDS

Film Review
Arts & Ideas

McGuinness got €800k in EU expenses for costs of office she owns

ARTHUR BEESLEY

Prospective Fine Gael presidential candidate Mairead McGuinness claimed hundreds of thousands of euro in MEP expenses for office rent and other costs when using family property in Co Meath as her constituency office.

Ms McGuinness’s expenses claims were within European Parliament rules. But they are seen by some in Fine Gael circles as a potential point of discomfort in the autumn presidential election campaign because of the prospect of questions being raised.

In her 16 years as an MEP, she is estimated to have received more than €800,000 in unvouched “general allowance” payments to cover “office rent and management costs” and expenses for phones, computers and other political representation costs.

During most of that period, Ms McGuinness located her constituency office in a building adjacent to her family home at Mentrím near Navan. Land Registry records show she and her husband, Tom Duff, own the office property.

“The Mentrím constituency office enabled her to serve the constituency, and have an easily accessible office for the regular and out of normal office hours’ work she engaged in every week as an MEP,” said a spokesman.

“The office was advertised to the public as her constituency office. Her financial details as an MEP were published on her website and regularly updated, including those in relation to her constituency office.”

Although the presidential election must be held within 60 days of Michael D Higgins leaving office on November 11th, prospective candidates across the political spectrum have been slow to come forward.

However, Ms McGuinness is widely expected to seek Fine Gael’s candidacy when the party opens nominations on Monday. She has long been considered one of the most likely contenders and has never ruled herself out.

A former journalist, she made her mark in European politics as a member of the parliament’s agriculture and rural development committee.

She became first vice-president of the parliament in 2017 but left in 2020 to become Ireland’s EU commissioner in succession to Phil Hogan after the “Golfgate” affair. Her term as commissioner for financial services ended last year.

According to the European Parliament, the general allowance “is not paid automatically”. MEPs must request payment.

“Members are free to request all or part of the amount of the allowance, and/or to reimburse amounts that have not been used,” the parliament’s rules state.

The monthly payment was set at €3,700 when Ms McGuinness was first elected an MEP in 2004 and had risen to €4,950 when she left in October 2020.

Her website is no longer online, but partial records remain on archived web pages. She is estimated to have received €222,000 in the 2004-2009 parliamentary term, €255,762 in the 2009-2014 term, €261,192 in the 2014-2019 and €79,200 in 2019-2020.

There was no comment from Ms McGuinness on these figures after they were put to her.



■ Mairead McGuinness replaced Phil Hogan as Ireland’s EU Commissioner.

➔ **Martin Heydon to be FG director of elections for presidential vote: page 2**

Fears grow emissions fines could hit €26bn

Plan to reduce emissions by 51% by 2030, but they fell just 12% last year

New EPA figures suggest legally binding targets will be missed by large margin

KEVIN O’SULLIVAN
Environment and Science Editor

The decline in Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions has slowed, according to fresh data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data, putting the State’s likely compliance costs at the higher end of estimates.

Provisional figures released today by the EPA increase the likelihood that legally binding 2030 climate targets will be missed by a large margin after momentum achieved in 2023 was lost.

Ireland could have to pay out between €8 billion and €26 billion to its EU partners if it does not step up climate action swiftly, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council said in February.

Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions decreased by just 2 per cent in 2024, down from a 6.8 per cent figure the previous year.

The EPA warned meeting national and EU commitments will be “extremely challenging”. Ireland’s national target is to reduce emissions by 51 per cent in 2030 compared with 2018. Last year, greenhouse gas emissions were 12 per cent below 2018 levels. Separate EPA projections in May indicated a 23 per cent reduction by decade end.

Minister for Energy and Climate Darragh O’Brien told the Oireachtas Committee on Climate, Environment and Energy yesterday that the latest forecasts showed the country would at best cut emissions by

only half the amount required by 2030. But he accepted there was a legal requirement to meet science-based targets and to adhere to carbon budgets, adding he was not “raising the white flag” yet.

Redouble efforts

“We have to redouble our efforts to get as close as possible to our 2030 targets,” he said.

EPA director general Laura Burke said that although last year’s data is moving in the right direction, “it is not at the necessary scale and pace”. She added: “If Ireland is to meet our first carbon budget, a further 10 per cent reduction in emissions is needed in 2025, which will be extremely challenging.”

The EPA figures show a reduction of 1.1 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO2eq) compared with 2023, with reductions in most sectors – except for heating of homes and buildings. Energy including electricity continues to be the exception, with sustained reductions in line with targets.

Transport and agriculture, however, reversed positive 2023 trends with modest declines compared with targets in the Government’s climate plan and strict carbon budgets.

In total, 54Mt CO2eq were emitted last year – excluding substantial emissions from land use and forestry.

Energy industry emissions decreased by 8.9 per cent last year to an all-time low of 7.2 Mt CO2eq.



Football in mourning after tragic death of Jota

Liverpool footballer Diogo Jota was killed in a car accident in Spain yesterday along with his brother and fellow professional soccer player André. The 28-year-old father of three married his partner, Rute Cardoso, less than two weeks ago.

■ Jota’s footballing talent, heart and will should be cherished after senseless death – Barney Ronay, page 15

Photograph: Paul Ellis/
AFP via Getty Images

Evacuation of ill children from Gaza stalls over visas

ELLEN COYNE
Political Correspondent

A plan to evacuate 18 seriously ill children from Gaza to Ireland for potentially life-saving treatment has stalled because of Government concerns about granting special visas to the children’s siblings.

Three people familiar with the ongoing mission to bring sick children from Gaza to Ireland have confirmed they were told the next evacuation is on hold until the visa issue is resolved.

Several children who had been listed for treatment since the Government first agreed to start evacuating paediatric patients in 2024 have since died.

Last September, the Cabinet agreed to bring up to 30 sick children and their mothers or carers to Ireland for treatment. Children listed for treatment

here are suffering from serious conditions such as cancer and kidney failure.

So far, 12 sick children have been flown via Egypt to Ireland in two operations in December and May. These were co-ordinated by the World Health Organisation, Government departments, the Health Service Executive, Children’s Health Ireland and the Red Cross.

The paediatric patients have been accompanied by either a mother or a carer, and 21 other accompanying family members. In several cases, it was recognised for humanitarian reasons that a sick child’s siblings could not be left behind in a war zone without a guardian.

The Department of Health said all 45 Gazans, including mothers and siblings of paediatric patients, have received medical care for “illnesses incurred as a result of living conditions in Gaza”.

All have received Stamp 4 Visas, which grant them special permission to remain here for a specified time.

Concerns have emerged about awarding those visas to patients’ siblings between the departments of justice and health.

One Government source said the medevac scheme is not operating “as it was intended to”.

The Department of Justice said that there have been “no delays” in the “processing” of visas for the medevac scheme.

The Department of Health said it is “engaged with the Department of Justice in relation to visas for entry to Ireland, border control and registration for permission to stay in the state”.

➔ **Israel steps up bombardment of Gaza, killing at least 90: page 7**

Weather

Today will start breezy with brighter intervals, but cloudy overall with outbreaks of rain and drizzle. Highs of 14-19C.

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Home News

Road death: A mother and her daughter (6) died following a crash between a car and a van near Carndonagh, Co Donegal on Wednesday evening. Page 2

Courts: Republican Marian McGlinchey, née Price, is suing Disney+ for defamation over a TV series. Page 4

World News



Gaza: Israel escalated its offensive before talks about a ceasefire, with warships and artillery launching a bombardment that killed over 90. Page 7

Business This Week

Economy: The Government’s financial position was boosted by what Paschal Donohoe described as ‘a sharp increase’ in corporate tax in June.

Dublin: A refurbished, GPO would be an ideal venue for a museum, An Post chief executive David McRedmond said.

Sports Friday

Rugby: Andy Farrell raised eyebrows by not including his son Owen in the original Lions squad but he’s arguably raised even more by calling him up now. Page 12

Soccer: Brighton would accept a £28 million (€32.6 million) fee for Irish striker Evan Ferguson. Page 15