

## CHANGE HOW YOU BREATHE, AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Sheila Wayman  
Health&Family



Success, either within Ireland or internationally, was strictly rationed – there was only so much of it to go around. If you were getting more, it meant there was less for me

Fintan O'Toole  
Opinion



'VENAL, AMBITIOUS GAMBLER' STATE PAPERS' SCATHING VIEW OF CHURCHILL

Mark Hennessy  
News

## O'Brien warned ESB and EirGrid over house connections

Minister for Energy asked for urgent action to tackle electricity constraints

O'Brien said he was 'gravely concerned' about new Dublin housing being held up

ARTHUR BEESLEY  
Current Affairs Editor

A threat to the delivery of new homes in Dublin due to electricity constraints led Minister for Energy Darragh O'Brien to demand urgent action from EirGrid and ESB to close off risks emerging in the new year.

Mr O'Brien told national grid operator EirGrid and power supplier ESB he was "gravely concerned" after the two State-owned companies said they could not assure power for new housing projects in north Dublin once current spare capacity was used up.

"There is a risk that from that point, which could be later this year or very early next year, ESB Networks will not be able to approve new applications for connections in north Dublin," the Minister said in an October letter to EirGrid chairman Brendan Tuohy and ESB chairman Terence O'Rourke.

"This situation cannot be allowed to arise," he added, in correspondence released under the Freedom of Information Act.

The companies provided special assurances to the Minister in late November, but only as EirGrid warned about "unprecedented" demand for power and ESB said it faced "significant" challenges to increase supply near the capital city.

North Dublin is the busiest part of the State for house-building and the area is critical for the achievement of new Government housing targets, which call for 300,000 new homes to be connected by 2030.

The pressure to boost electricity capacity comes amid surging demand, including from heavy industrial consumers of power such as data centres, which are buildings that house highly energy-intensive computer systems for storing internet, business and artificial intelligence (AI) data.

An €18.9 billion master plan for energy infrastructure was approved this month, including a €2 billion State investment in EirGrid and

€1.5 billion for ESB.

But internal files from the Minister's department and ESB Networks show tension over constraints on future electricity supplies for housing, in north Dublin particularly.

The Minister met the leaders of EirGrid and ESB Networks on October 9th. "The two chief executives described potential sources of additional capacity that they are investigating urgently, but were not yet able to confirm the extent of this capacity or when it would be available," a note of the meeting said.

Mr O'Brien asked them to return in a fortnight "and to be in a position to reassure him that there is a clear path to meeting connections applications from new housing and enterprise applicants for the foreseeable future".

Mr Tuohy and Mr O'Rourke each wrote separately to the Minister on November 5th. Mr Tuohy said: "I can confirm that EirGrid can facilitate the processing of demand request applications . . . for north Dublin in 2026."

Mr O'Rourke cited "additional actions jointly identified", saying he was confident ESB Networks will be in a position to respond to the predicted level of applications.

Asked about the correspondence, the Minister's office said: "The two grid companies have devised a set of actions, now in progress, which will ensure that these essential new connections will be available."

EirGrid said it was supporting ESB Networks to facilitate connections of new domestic housing and small businesses to the network.

ESB Networks said no housing developers will have their application rejected due to network constraints, but said there were requirements "in some cases" to carry out reinforcement work on the power distribution or transmission networks in advance.

It added that the number of houses and apartments connected by ESB Networks in the year to the end of November 2025 was over 16 per cent higher than the 2024 figure.



If the cap fits  
Grabbing a breather on race day

Dapper dresser Johnny Burcher-Holohan (7) from Co Tipperary and his family take a rest between races at Leopardstown on the last day of the Christmas festival. Willie Mullins's Lossiemouth took the honours yesterday in the December Hurdle.

Report: Page 18  
Photograph: Nick Bradshaw

## US security guarantee not long enough, Kyiv warns

Ukraine denies accusation by Moscow it attacked Putin residence with drones

CHRISTOPHER MILLER,  
FABRICE DEPREZ  
and JOE MILLER

The US has offered Ukraine a 15-year security guarantee, but Kyiv wants three times as long to deter Russian aggression, Ukrainian president Volodymyr

Zelenskyy said yesterday.

Mr Zelenskyy also denied accusations by Moscow that Kyiv tried to attack a residence belonging to Russian president Vladimir Putin with drones.

The Ukrainian president called for a guarantee lasting as much as 50 years the day after a

summit with US president Donald Trump that both leaders said was significant but which failed to make a decisive breakthrough.

In a WhatsApp exchange with reporters as he returned to Europe yesterday, Mr Zelenskyy said he had told the US president that 15 years would be too short to deter Russia in a conflict that began with the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

"I also told him that we would like to consider the possibility of 30, 40 or 50 years," he

added. A 20-point draft peace plan that Kyiv revealed this month mentioned a security guarantee that would "mirror" the Nato alliance's Article 5 commitment to mutual defence. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Russia accused Ukraine of attacking one of president Putin's residences with drones, saying this "definitive move to a policy of state terror" had prompted it to "reconsider its negotiating position". But Mr Zelenskyy

said the Russian claim was a "complete fabrication intended to justify additional attacks against Ukraine".

On Sunday, Mr Trump said he had held a "good and very productive" telephone conversation lasting more than two hours with Mr Putin. He held a second "positive" call with Mr Putin yesterday, said White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt in a post on X.

The Kremlin said Mr Putin had told Mr Trump that the alleged drone attack would not

"go unanswered". State news-wire Tass quoted Yuri Ushakov, Mr Putin's foreign policy adviser, as saying Mr Trump was "shocked and outraged" by the "crazy" attack and that the US president added: "Thank God we didn't give them Tomahawks", long-range precision missiles sought by Kyiv from the US. – Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2025

➔ Kyiv hopeful of closer Trump alignment: page 7

## Driving tester's 'energy' made learner feel 'uncomfortable', RSA told

SARAH BURNS

Learner drivers arriving to their test unaccompanied and a tester's "energy" making a person feel "uncomfortable" were among the complaints made to the Road Safety Authority (RSA) about its driving test service last year.

Another complaint submitted to the State agency that provides driver testing and licensing told of how a resident's housing estate was becoming "intolerable" because of its use by testers and learner drivers.

The complaint, which was among a sample released by the RSA under the Freedom of Information Act, said the area was experiencing "up to 12 cars per hour practising on our corner, seven days a week".

"Up to three cars can be lined up at any one time waiting to use the corner for reversing," the complaint said.

"It is becoming intolerable. I

totally understand that students need to practise but the volume of cars is simply too much and is impacting on our use of the road, including accessing the driveway, turning down our road, children playing on bikes, scooters, etc."

The complainant added it was "impacting on our privacy", that it had been "a very quiet estate" until last year and asked if the estate could be used less frequently.

Last year, the RSA received 2,024 complaints in relation to the driving test service – equating to under 1 per cent of the 253,850 tests carried out in 2024. There were 1,952 complaints received in 2025 up to the end of November.

Other complaints related to learner drivers feeling their test was not conducted fairly, that a fault was unwarranted or their test wasn't conducted because they failed to meet certain conditions.

One member of the public complained they had "witnessed two drivers today arriving for their test with no accompanying driver and yet went in, did their test and passed".

"Is this not against the law?" they asked. They said they were accompanying a learner driver to their test that day.

A separate complaint from a learner driver said they were told by an examiner their "English was not good enough" despite living and working in Ireland for three years.

The person said maybe their "perception was off" but that the tester made them feel "uncomfortable". Another claimed an examiner's conduct was "unprofessional" and that faults listed were "either incorrectly assessed or not present at all".

The RSA said all complaints are reviewed fully by the driver testing team and responses issued out to complainants.

## Weather

Cloudy start but turning brighter. Most areas will be dry. Highs of 3-7 degrees.

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## Home News

**Organ donation:** The number of organ transplants from donors in Ireland fell sharply this year, but the HSE said it is not because of the new opt-out register. page 2

**Demography:** Ireland needs larger families, according to a National Economic and Social Council report. page 3

## World News



**Taiwan:** China has launched live-fire drills around Taiwan in what Beijing described as a stern warning against 'independence separatist forces'. page 7

## Business Today

**Mortgages:** The number of homebuyers using brokers to secure a mortgage has jumped by 75 per cent over the past six years, industry data shows. page 14

**Hairdressing:** Peter Mark Salon Group paid a €2.5m dividend to its shareholders last year. page 14

## Sports Tuesday

**Soccer:** Unai Emery returns to Arsenal tonight hoping to knock his former club off their perch with his high-flying Aston Villa side. page 17

**Boxing:** Anthony Joshua was 'stable' in hospital last night after a car he was travelling in was involved in a fatal crash in Nigeria. page 17

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