

FENTON'S FAREWELL DUBS STAR TO RETIRE

Gordon Manning Sports



Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are going through the motions of a spat. An old couple joined at the hip, spicing things up in front of the neighbours

Fintan O'Toole Opinion & Analysis



BEAT THE BURNOUT HOW TO TAKE A CAREER BREAK WITHOUT GOING BROKE

Joanne Hunt Business



Harris doubles down on defence of FG candidate McGahon in face of criticism

Taoiseach suggests criminal acquittal relevant rather than civil court damages

Ten party leaders clash over issues including housing in RTÉ debate

HARRY MCGEE Political Correspondent

Fine Gael has stepped up its defence of its Louth candidate John McGahon in the face of widespread criticism from rival parties over his suitability.

For a second day running, Taoiseach Simon Harris and senior colleagues were required to defend the 34-year-old Senator following the emergence of video footage showing him striking a man several times in the head during a late-night incident in 2018.

Contemporaneous pictures of the victim, Breen White, showing extensive bruising on his face were also published in a newspaper on Sunday.

Mr Harris repeated his defence of the Senator in the 10-way leaders' debate on RTÉ last night.

Mr McGahon faced charges of assault causing harm arising out of the incident but was acquitted by a jury when the case came to trial in 2022.

However, in a civil action taken by Mr White, a jury concluded in May 2024 that the Louth Senator was 65 per cent responsible for the assault. He was ordered to pay €39,000 in damages to the victim.

He was selected as a candidate for the five-seat constituency after the civil case was concluded.

Mr Harris argued that the standard for suitability as a candidate should be based on the criminal and not civil courts.



From left: Joan Collins, Right to Change; Cian O'Callaghan, Social Democrats; Michael Collins, Independent Ireland; Micheál Martin, Fianna Fáil; Simon Harris, Fine Gael; RTÉ presenter Katie Hannon; Roderic O'Gorman, Green Party; Peadar Tóibín, Aontú; Ivana Bacik, Labour; Richard Boyd Barrett, People Before Profit; Mary Lou McDonald, Sinn Féin. PHOTOGRAPH: NIALL CARSON/PA WIRE

big parties, Fianna Fáil's Micheál Martin and Sinn Féin's Mary Lou McDonald, dismissed Mr Harris's description of the incident as a scuffle.

Both said separately that Mr McGahon would not have been accepted as a candidate if he were a member of their parties.

'Very violent' Asked about the staunch defence of Mr McGahon by the Taoiseach, Mr Martin replied: "I am surprised at his decision to double down on this candidature."

Commenting on the video footage, Ms McDonald said: "I think it is very disturbing and very violent, a lot of blows to the victim's head. It's very shocking to see anybody in public life behave like that."

Mr Martin said what he had

seen on the video was a "vicious assault".

Mr Harris and senior colleagues, including Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Paschal Donohoe and Minister for Justice Helen McEntee, continued to emphasise the fact that Mr McGahon was acquitted by a jury of his peers in interviews yesterday.

Mr McGahon did not respond to requests for comment yesterday. There was no indication of his name being withdrawn as a candidate as the deadline for nominations closed.

Social Democrats deputy leader Cian O'Callaghan deputised for party leader Holly Cairns in the debate. Ms Cairns is expecting her first child this weekend.

Ten party leaders, including

Gael, now is the time for change". The Labour Party, meanwhile, launched its manifesto yesterday and pledged to spend €6 billion of the Apple tax fund to establish a State construction company to build on State-owned land.

Both Mr Martin and Mr Harris ruled out coalition with Sinn Féin.

Asked if Sinn Féin has a credible path to government if the two other large parties are ruling it out, Ms McDonald made an argument that "after a century of Fianna Fáil and Fine

General election 2024: news and analysis, pages 2&3; Opinion, page 12

Family recalls strain on detective immediately before his death: page 4

Garda 'felt under pressure' before death, court told

Det Supt Colm Fox, who died by suicide in 2018, was investigating gang shooting

FIACHRA GALLAGHER

Family members of a senior garda who died by suicide almost seven years ago have told his inquest of the intense pressure he was under during his investigation of the Regency Hotel shooting in 2016 and the subsequent trial.

Det Supt Colm Fox (56), who was found dead in his office in Ballymun Garda station on February 10th, 2018, was the senior investigating officer tasked with investigating the fatal attack at the hotel in Whitehall, north Dublin – a major escalation in a feud between the Kinahan and Hutch organised crime groups.

Edel Fox, the detective's widow, told Dublin District Coroner's Court yesterday that her husband was not sleeping and was eating poorly during the Special Criminal Court trial of Patrick Hutch, who was accused of murdering David Byrne, a Kinahan associate, at the Regency Hotel on February 5th, 2016.

Mr Hutch, of Champion's Avenue, Dublin 1, had pleaded not guilty to the charge, and subsequently walked free when the trial collapsed following Det Supt Fox's death.

Ms Fox said that, from the outset of the Regency Hotel shooting investigation, her husband was under pressure from commissioners.

"Colm felt under pressure to progress the investigation," she said.

On the evening of February 3rd, 2018, while the trial was ongoing, Ms Fox said that she found Det Supt Fox in a distressed state at their home in Malahide, north Co Dublin, and that he "did not seem rational". She said she "knew it had something to do with the trial".

Ms Fox said Det Supt Fox told her "I may have made a mistake", but that she had no idea what this meant, because he was not making sense.

"That was like some kind of a turning point," Ms Fox said. "I nearly felt like something broke in him that night."

Sgt Michael Ryan told the inquest that on the morning of his death, Det Supt Fox called him into his office in Ballymun Garda station, where they had a "general" conversation about the Regency Hotel trial.

Sgt Ryan said the detective said if he was to "do it all again", that he would "do some things differently", although he did not elaborate on his comment.

David Fox, Det Supt Fox's son, told the inquest that the trial was "hard" for his father who was seeing "his lads" – a reference to his Garda colleagues – being "torn apart", and "there was nothing he could do about it".

The inquest continues.

Press Up co-founder taken to court over €1.2m loans

A property investment finance company is seeking judgment for almost €1.2 million against businessman Paddy McKillen jnr over a guarantee he gave on the loans to buy a property in England for development as a hotel and venue.

Mr McKillen jnr is a co-founder of Ireland's largest hospitality group, Press Up, and son of well-known developer Paddy McKillen snr.

Investment finance firm AHG Properties Unlimited Company applied yesterday to Mr Justice Denis McDonald to admit its summary judgment proceedings against Mr McKil-

len jnr to the fast track commercial list. After hearing the defendant had requested an adjournment, the judge adjourned the matter for two weeks.

Personal guarantee

In an affidavit seeking admission of the proceedings to the Commercial Court, AHG director Tony O'Shea said Mr McKillen jnr had provided a personal guarantee, limited to €1 million plus interest, on loans totalling €10 million to buy The Central Hall and adjoining buildings in Corporation Street/Ryder Street in Birmingham.

The plan was to redevelop it as a 155-bed "Dean" hotel with a 1,500-capacity event venue.

The loans were made to Creative Cedar Ltd, a UK company of which Mr McKillen jnr is a director and also part of the Press Up Group. Mr O'Shea said he always understood the AHG facility, provided in 2022 and 2023 in two tranches of €9 million and €1 million, was principally to buy the Birmingham property and that it would be subsequently refinanced by development finance from a separate lender.

However, he said, as the final repayment date approached on

December 30th, 2023, Creative Cedar sought an extension to April to allow for discussions regarding the potential refinancing of the AHG facility.

Refinancing deal

There followed a number of exchanges and a meeting with Mr McKillen jnr in March in which it was learned that the sale of Dean hotels in Ireland and other Press Up hotels had concluded but had not resulted in enough equity to repay AHG. A proposed refinancing deal would also leave redevelopment plans €15 million short.

There followed further corre-

spondence and a meeting with Mr McKillen jnr after which AHG advised the defendant it was reserving its rights under the loan agreement and evaluating enforcement options.

Mr O'Shea said he visited the Birmingham property on September 25th to find it had deteriorated significantly since he visited in 2021.

On September 30th, AHG notified Creative Cedar that €12.5 million was now due on the loan facility, including interest. It also made a formal demand of Mr McKillen jnr to repay €1.198 million under his personal guarantee for the loan.

Weather

Morning rain, sleet and snow will move southwards clearing to the south in the afternoon. Highs of 2-8 degrees.

THE IRISH TIMES
24-28 Tara Street, Dublin 2.
D02 CX89
Telephone: (01) 9203900
Online: irishtimes.com
The recommended retail price of THE IRISH TIMES in the Republic of Ireland is €2.60
Subscriptions: Tel: (01) 9203901
Email: subscribe@irishtimes.com



Home News

Inquest: The sister of a German backpacker who was murdered in Northern Ireland 36 years ago hopes a fresh inquest will deliver answers: page 4

Lebanon: An Irish model says she had to pay almost €2,000 to leave the war-torn country: page 5

World News

Ukraine: The Kremlin said Washington had been "reckless, dangerous" to give Kyiv clearance to hit Russian territory with US-supplied missiles: page 6

Business + Your Money

Hospitality: The owner of Inchydoney Island hotel in West Cork said Government policy is turning Ireland into another Switzerland in terms of prices: page 14

Interest rates: The ECB would need to see "overwhelming" data to make a big-rate cut in December: page 15

Sports Tuesday

Soccer: After Ireland's 5-0 defeat to England, Heimur Hallgrímsson must transform a third-seed country into one of 16 European qualifiers for World Cup: page 19

Gaelic games: Derry's Chrissy McKaigue has announced his retirement from intercounty football: page 23

Chartered Directors. Know Better.

Designed for experienced directors. The IoD Chartered Director Programme.

Lead with confidence and credibility. Execute with good governance. Advance your professional career and book your place on the IoD Chartered Director Programme. Enrolling for 2025 now.

Institute of Directors Ireland

iodireland.ie

Mary Brennan CDir, FCA, CIFD
Experienced Board Member,
Chair, Committee Chair,
and IoD Ireland Member.