

THE WORK PERKS THAT REALLY MATTER

Joanne Hunt
Money Matters



The angry flea circus buzzing around 'woke' Minister for Justice Helen McEntee goes beyond the usual political sniping

Kathy Sheridan
Opinion & Analysis



A THOROUGHLY MODERN HEROINE JANE AUSTEN'S EMMA REIMAGINED FOR THE STAGE

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Arts & Ideas

Sinn Féin denies 'piggy bank heist' in clash over spending

Party promises to spend an extra €56bn over next five years as it unveils manifesto

McDonald defends plans to review RTE coverage of conflict in the Middle East

JENNIFER BRAY
Political Correspondent

Sinn Féin has denied claims that it is planning a €16 billion "piggy bank heist", as Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil rounded on the party's tax and spending plans.

With just over a week and a half left until polling day, Sinn Féin unveiled its general election manifesto yesterday with promises to spend an extra €56 billion – made up of additional €41.8 billion capital spend and an additional €14.3 billion in current spending – over the next five years.

This includes plans for a multibillion-euro "mini budget" in the first 100 days of government and a tax package which would see the eventual abolition of the universal social charge on incomes up to €45,000. The party has also pledged to abolish the property tax, which brings in about €500 million a year and represents about 7 per cent of local government revenue. Sinn Féin finance spokesman Pearse Doherty said this would leave a gap in local authority funding which his party would cover through general government expenditure.

Fine Gael Minister for Public Expenditure Paschal Donohoe accused Sinn Féin of narrowing the tax base to such an extent that tax receipts would fall away. He also said Sinn Féin wanted to conduct "the biggest heist ever on the island of Ireland with the raiding of carefully saved funds and throwing caution to the wind," referring to the €16 billion Future Ireland Fund and the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund.

However, Mr Doherty told The Irish Times his party would not use the money in those funds, and would instead add a further €15 billion to them which would come from projected surpluses. He last night called on Mr Donohoe to "immediately retract" his statement.

"Our manifesto makes it clear that not only will this money not be touched, but we will increase the funds by a further €15 billion. This will bring

the funds to a total of €31 billion," Mr Doherty said.

Sinn Féin has also promised to increase the minimum wage, end long-term homelessness by 2030, deliver 300,000 new homes by 2029 and introduce €10-a-day childcare. The party has also proposed a "solidarity tax" for high-income earners at 3 per cent for income over €140,000 as well as a second home charge of €400.

Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald also defended her plans for a review of RTE's coverage of the conflict in the Middle East. Fine Gael accused Sinn Féin of political interference "in the independence and editorial process of our public service broadcaster".

As the general election campaign moved past the halfway point, the focus remained on each of the party's spending promises.

National Children's Hospital

It comes as the Health Service Executive confirmed to The Irish Times that spending on the national children's hospital was, at the end of October, €18.85 million "over profile" or above expected spending levels. A spokesman confirmed that, at the end of October, some €200.36 million had been spent on the new children's hospital from the HSE capital plan. The total 2024 allocation for the hospital in the capital plan is just over €209 million. Fine Gael leader Simon Harris came under pressure this week over spending on the hospital, with Mr Harris saying the "buck stops with me".

The focus on spending and financial prudence also comes as Mr Harris will today outline to a Cabinet meeting his plans for a "Brexit-type" response to protect Ireland from future economic shocks. He is expected to state there will be a "challenging time ahead" for Ireland's economic security with significant geopolitical instability.

➔ **General election 2024: news and analysis, pages 2, 3&4; Opinion, page 12**



Marking 1,000 days of war

People visit the makeshift memorial paying tribute to Ukrainian and foreign fighters, on the 1,000th day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, at Independence Square in Kyiv.

■ Daniel McLaughlin reports from Kyiv: **page 9; Editorial Comment: page 13**

Photograph: Roman Pilipey / AFP

Another 12 Spiritan abuse survivors come forward

PATSY MCGARRY

An additional 12 survivors of abuse at Spiritan schools have come forward since the scoping inquiry discovered 347 allegations of child sex abuse at the five schools in September.

The scoping inquiry report found that there were allegations made against 67 alleged abusers at the Spiritan-run schools: Blackrock College, St Mary's College, St Michael's College in Dublin, and Rockwell College in Co Tipperary.

The incidents of sexual abuse were among a total of 2,395 allegations of sexual abuse at 308 schools run by the religious orders. The abuse was mostly described as having occurred from the early 1960s to the early 1990s, with the highest number of reported incidents occurring in the early to mid-1970s.

The latest additional cases are disclosed in a newsletter from Restore Together, a voluntary support group for

College in Co Tipperary.

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The latest additional cases are disclosed in a newsletter from Restore Together, a voluntary support group for

victims/survivors of sexual abuse in the Spiritan schools.

"It is a well-documented fact that sex abuse is underreported and that is especially true of non-recent male, child sex abuse. We are acutely aware that there are many people affected by abuse who need support but have not yet made the very difficult decision to come forward," the group said.

Supported by past pupils' unions at the five Spiritan schools, Restore Together has highlighted the availability of help and

support for abuse survivors through the Spiritan Schools' Restorative Programme.

"There is an entirely confidential listening ear" available to people who may need it, the group said.

"Expert therapy and counselling from independent professionals are available to all impacted by abuse, in all Spiritan institutions," with costs paid for by the Spiritans, it said.

"Our collective responsibility is to ensure that no Spiritan survivor of abuse will be left be-

hind," they said.

The scoping inquiry uncovered 130 allegations made against 24 alleged abusers at Willow Park, the primary school next to Blackrock College, and 55 allegations against 13 abusers at Blackrock College itself. The next highest number of allegations was 60 relating to 18 alleged abusers at Rockwell College.

There were 32 allegations made against six alleged abusers at St Mary's College in Rathmines; 10 against four alleged

abusers at St Michael's primary and post-primary school in Ballsbridge; and five allegations against two alleged abusers at Templeogue College.

Thirty-seven additional allegations were made against the Spiritans that were not connected to any school.

Restore Together is in negotiations with the Spiritans about a redress scheme for survivors of abuse in their institutions.

The group expects to launch its own website before Christmas, at restoretogogether.ie.

Double murderer asks court to let him live in family home

ELLEN O'RIORDAN

A double murderer has brought High Court proceedings seeking to overturn a "grossly disproportionate" decision that effectively bans him from living in his family home where he murdered his wife 22 years ago.

Declan Power was convicted in 2003 at the Central Criminal Court after pleading guilty to murdering Joan Power (40) and publican Maurice Curran (48), with whom he suspected his wife was having an affair.

He and Ms Power had three children, as did Mr Curran, who ran The Decies Bar in Clashmore, Co Waterford.

Power (then 47), a mechanic, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the March 2002 murders and secured temporary release, on strict conditions, in April 2021.

In his High Court case, he claims he is effectively barred from living in his family home by the Minister for Justice's decision to prohibit him from travelling within 18km of Clashmore village for any purpose other than work. For his job he can travel within 6km of the village. He says his home is about 7km from Clashmore, to which he has no need or wish to travel.

Before imprisonment, he says, he worked as a self-employed mechanic from the garage adjoining the family home in Bawnacomera, Ardmore, Co Waterford, which he built in 1981 and owns.

Since being released, he secured employment transporting cars to a vehicle-testing centre in Cork and is living in an apartment on High Street, Dunganvar, Co Waterford.

He is asking the court for an order quashing the Minister for

Justice's decision of last June related to conditions on his parole. He also wants an early injunction, in advance of a trial of his case, restraining the Minister from taking any further steps to prevent him living at his family home.

He alleges the Minister's decision is "grossly disproportionate" to the point of being unfair, contrary to law and a disproportionate interference with his constitutional rights.

He claims the "arbitrary limit" on distance to Clashmore was imposed unreasonably and irrationally, particularly where non-compliance would cause him to breach the terms of his conditional release. He also alleges breaches of his rights to liberty, fair trial, private life and his home under the European Convention on Human Rights.

His judicial review case was adjourned to next month.

Weather

A cold and crisp morning. Generally dry till evening when wintry rain will move into the west. Highs of 3-6 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
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Home News

Regency Hotel: A garda believed he made a "major error" while investigating a gangland shooting at the hotel, an inquest hears: **page 7**

Asylum seekers: Hundreds of asylum seekers staying in tented accommodation in Crooksling are living in "freezing conditions": **page 5**

World News



France: Gisèle Pelicot, who was subjected to mass rape organised by her husband, condemned the cowardice of the men involved: **page 9**

Business + Commercial Property

Receivership sale: A receiver has been appointed to 27 properties, including the Israeli embassy, managed by Quanta Capital: **page 14**

Rebuilding costs: The Society of chartered surveyors is urging homeowners to check their homes are adequately insured: **page 15**

Sports Wednesday

Gaelic Games: Brian Fenton was the latest, but he won't be the last Dublin player to announce his retirement before 2025: **page 20**

Rugby: Caelan Doris and Aoife Wafer have won the player of the year gongs at the Rugby Writers Ireland awards: **page 23**

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