

# Election Times

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**Facing tough decisions and making choices (page 4)**



**Make sure your voice is heard (page 6)**

## Kenny plans for February election

Taoiseach Enda Kenny looks set to call the general election for late February as polls show growing support for the re-election of the government.

The most recent Red C opinion poll for the Sunday Business Post has Fine Gael on 32% (up 1) and Labour on 9% (up 2).

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin is on 19% (up 2), Fianna Fáil is on 17% (down 2) and independents and other smaller parties are on 23%. Within that number independent candidates are on 14% support.

Though current numbers put the Fine Gael/Labour coalition just short of the 80 Dáil seats needed to form a majority, both parties expect to increase their level of support once the election is called.

There is now widespread expectation among government ministers and backbench TDs that Kenny will go to the country next month. Though the date is entirely the Taoiseach's prerogative, many in political circles believe the election will be held on either 25 or 26 February.

The latest the election can be held is 8 April, but minis-

ters expect that the Taoiseach, if re-elected, will want to have a government in place in time for the annual St Patrick's Day ministerial exodus and his own visit to the White House in March.

Kenny, who is seeking a historic second term for Fine Gael, will be expected to pay a visit to Áras an Uachtaráin to dissolve the Dáil in the week following Labour's annual conference in Westmeath on 30 January.

This will come exactly a week after Kenny rallies his own party at the Fine Gael Ard Fheis which takes place in the Citywest Hotel on Friday, 22 and Saturday, 23 January.

Kenny and senior ministers, including Michael Noonan, Richard Bruton and Simon Harris, are expected to outline the party's "long-term economic plan" for the country at the annual gathering on the outskirts of Dublin.

This plan will include the party's ultimate aim of abolishing the hated Universal Social Charge and creating full employment by the end of Fine Gael's second term.



Image: Sam Pearson

## The XX Factor: Dublin Bay South in focus

**Political Analyst Theresa Newman takes a look at gender quotas and the women who are running in Dublin Bay South (on page 8)**

## Sinn Féin to retain all three rates of USC

The 2016 general election is the first to be held since Ireland returned to the capital markets and is therefore poised to be one of the most important elections in the history of the State, writes *Andrew Ralph*.

Before you vote this Spring, you should strongly consider the implications on your personal finances in the event of a Sinn Féin government.

With GDP expected to grow at 6% in 2016 and unemployment at 8.9%, its lowest level since 2008, it is important that voters do not sacrifice stability for uncertainty. Sinn Féin's policies present a clear and real threat to the country's economic stability and a victory for them in this election, would throw Ireland off its course to full recovery. (continued on page 2)

## Deficit to be eliminated by 2018

With Ireland looking set to be the fastest-growing economy in Europe once again in 2016, the Government is expected to trim the deficit forecast for the year.

The government trimmed its forecast for the 2015 deficit last month to 1.7pc of gross domestic product from 2.1pc, thanks to a booming economy and a surge in tax paid by the country's multinational firms.

The government now says it can eliminate a deficit that was the highest in the euro zone six years ago before the target of 2018 that it agreed with the European Union.

After tax receipts reported earlier this week showed the State collected 7.8pc, or €3.3bn, more tax than expected in 2015, Goodbody Stockbrokers forecast that the deficit might be eliminated this year.



# News

## In Brief

### Jobs Boost for Irish tech company Asavie

Irish software developer Asavie has pledged to create more than 100 jobs at its Dublin offices over the next two and a half years.

The company said in December that it plans to recruit 106 people to support its on-line platform PassBridge.

PassBridge is a cloud service that allows mobile firms to quickly launch and scale their operations.

The announcement will see the current number of 80 employees more than double.

### Lower taxes on the way

Middle income earners are in line to see massive tax cuts if the current Government is returned to power, according to the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste.

Before Christmas, Labour leader Joan Burton promised tax cuts for all workers who earn up to €120,000.

The party aims to scrap the Universal Social Charge for those on €70,000 or less. At €100,000 a new mechanism will gradually reduce the USC, but every worker on €120,000 or less will enjoy some form of reduction.

Separately, Taoiseach and Fine Gael leader Enda Kenny has promised to reduce income taxes and bring Ireland in line with lower tax countries such as the US and Britain.

### Ministers' "Bro-mance" helped strategy

The close friendship between Ministers Michael Noonan (FG) and Brendan Howlin (LAB) has been credited with helping improve the stability of the nation's finances.

Reflecting on his five years in office, Noonan said: "We've had a very good personal relationship and a very good working relationship and I think the relationship has contributed a lot to the result now after five Budgets."

# Dad's praise for 'three angels' who saved his life after heart attack

Dubliner Steve Lawlor has said he owes his life to three women who helped bring him back from the dead after he suffered a massive heart attack while driving.

Yesterday, the 45-year-old met one of his "three angels" - Councillor Kate O'Connell. She gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation after he was found slumped over the wheel of his van in Rathgar.

Steve told the Herald his remarkable tale of survival and how he was lucky to be alive and was looking forward to the new year after his ordeal.

Dad-of-one Steve explained how the incident happened on Sunday, November 1. He had been visiting his mother in Blessington and was returning to his home in Rathfarnham.

"I was driving home at around 6.30pm and my last recollection is setting off for home," he said.

He was driving a van and was on his own. In Rathgar, an onlooker saw the vehicle come to a peculiar halt in the middle of the road, and it then rolled to the side of the road. Maria Young recognised what was going on and quickly went to his aid.

Fortunately Maria is a former nurse who worked in the Mater Hospital and had also worked in paediatric cardiology in Crumlin Hospital. "There was another lady there who was a physiotherapist, who I have not been



**Councillor Kate O'Connell with Steve Lawlor, whose life she helped save by giving him CPR after his heart attack.**  
Image: Justin Farrelly

able to get a hold of at all," said Steve.

Meanwhile, Kate O'Connell, a Fine Gael councillor with a pharmacy in the village, was alerted to what was going on and arrived to help as well. While Kate performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, the other two women did chest compressions and kept him going. They took it in turns until the ambulance arrived.

Kate said that Steve had no

pulse when she arrived at the scene.

"We did 12 or 15 minutes of serious CPR on essentially a guy that was not alive," she said.

"The fire brigade arrived. They had to shock him to bring him back and it took him three shocks. It was only on the third shock that they got a heart rate," she said.

Steve was brought to St James's Hospital. "I woke up in the hospital with a whole

lot of tubes," he said. Surgeons installed three stents in Steve. He will have to undergo cardio rehab in the first week of January.

"I'm so lucky that there were three angels on the scene who had the knowledge and expertise to sufficiently keep me going, that I was gone for so long, that there was no brain damage or more significant damage to the heart itself.

"The cardiologist is eager

to hear the story because he reckons I am just incredibly lucky to be alive," he said.

Steve has a son, Ryan, who is nearly nine, and a partner Karen Thompson (46). "I was just so mindful over the Christmas period that I got to enjoy it with the family, and how different it all might have been," he said.

"My phone was left behind at the scene, and Maria Young went through the numbers and found mum's number and rang her. "When they were in touch with the hospital, they were kind of preparing my family for the worst," he said.

However, the expertise of the public and the emergency services was what saved Steve.

He is a service engineer with Trane, a multinational company that specialises in air conditioning. "They have been brilliant to me," he said.

Steve is now planning an event to raise money for a defibrillator for the Blue Light pub in the foothills of the Dublin mountains, and to have staff members trained up in its use.

Kate said the incident highlighted the importance of CPR training.

**This article first appeared in the Evening Herald on 30th December 2015**

## Sinn Féin to retain all three rates of USC



Image: Shutterstock

(continued from page 1)

The most recent alternative budget launched by Sinn Féin would mean that Irish taxpayers would be paying an additional €1.1 billion on their incomes.

Sinn Féin TD for Cork North-Central, Jonathan O'Brien, said during the last general election campaign that "Sinn Féin would scrap the USC and introduce a third rate of tax at 48% for anyone earning over €100,000" - This contrasts

with the upcoming general election, in which Sinn Féin is the only party that supports the retention of all three rates of USC.

In fact, when voting against the Finance Bill 2015, Sinn Féin TDs voted against reducing the USC for 90,000 low-income earners.

Sinn Féin has also proposed to cut tax relief on pension contributions. This move would cost an average earner €800 per annum in their take home pay.

Unlike Fine Gael, Sinn Féin have failed to give a definite guarantee that they would not increase our corporation tax rate of 12.5% - Sinn Féin MEP Matt Carthy criticised changes made by Minister Noonan to Ireland's internationally competitive rate as "regressive".

In 2015, the State raised €6.3 billion in revenue from Corporation Tax. Sinn Féin's unwillingness to give a cast iron defence of the 12.5% rate is very worrying for the

job security for over 250,000 people that are employed by foreign firms in Ireland.

The progressive and competitive tax rate is something we need to protect and promote. Foreign direct investment, and increased globalisation of Ireland acts as a stimulus for the economy, and creates more opportunities for our highly skilled young workforce.



# Ryan says Cowen is a Green thinker

**Tiger Throwback:**This piece first appeared in the Irish Times on Sat, Apr 5, 2008

Minister for Communications Eamon Ryan says he is comfortable with the prospect of Brian Cowen becoming taoiseach and he expects to remain in his department.

Mr Ryan singled out for praise a speech given by Mr Cowen last year and said it showed that the future Taoiseach was close to Green Party thinking on important issues.

Mr Cowen's Indecon speech in November was seen as setting

out his vision for the future. In it, he called for reform of the public service, higher productivity in the private sector and said it may be appropriate to borrow to fund the National Development Plan.

He emphasised that high productivity, enhanced equality and safeguarding the environment would be the goals of the Irish State by the time of the centenary of the Easter Rising in 2016.

Mr Ryan said: "He set out

three crucial developments for the country last year - how we achieve equity in our society, how we achieve productivity and how we tackle environmental issues.

Those are three agendas that I'm equally committed to working in Government on. I think if Brian is selected by Fianna Fáil, we can and should work very effectively together.

"We are all going to have to learn together how we manage

the retreat from our use of fossil fuels. One of the messages I am consistently saying is that part of that solution is a way of protecting our economy and protecting jobs and that is something that Brian Cowen understands and sees the potential for."

Mr Ryan said he did not "see any particular change in tack" in the direction of the new Government and was confident that both he and the other Green Party Minister

John Gormley would keep their respective departments.

"I think that is something that we agreed with the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern," he said. "I don't have a sense that that is going to change. I think to a certain extent, in my own ministry and in John's, we have a huge agenda ahead of us. We're very much working on delivering real change."

## Green party in focus

The inability of the last Government to adequately regulate the lending habits of our financial institutions resulted in Ireland losing her economic sovereignty and being subjected to a €64 billion bailout from international lending agencies. As the 2016 general election approaches, we cannot forget that the Green Party played a leading role in that coalition of chaos.

John Gormley, the former party leader said that "we cannot go back and reverse the property bubble and the reckless banking which we constantly opposed" as the economy started to collapse and edged deeper into crisis.

It was under their watch, that Ireland's economy was allowed to be unstable without proper oversight or regulation.

Some of the worst criticisms made against the party during their time in Government, have come from within its own ranks – In 2009, Cork City Councillor for the Greens, Chris O'Leary, resigned from the party after claiming that "The Government lacks leadership, they seem to be very much like

headless chickens."

The 2009 budget that the Greens voted for had deeply negative consequences on Irish taxpayers. The standard rate of VAT rose from 21.5% to 23%, with DIRT on savings increasing from 23% to 25%.

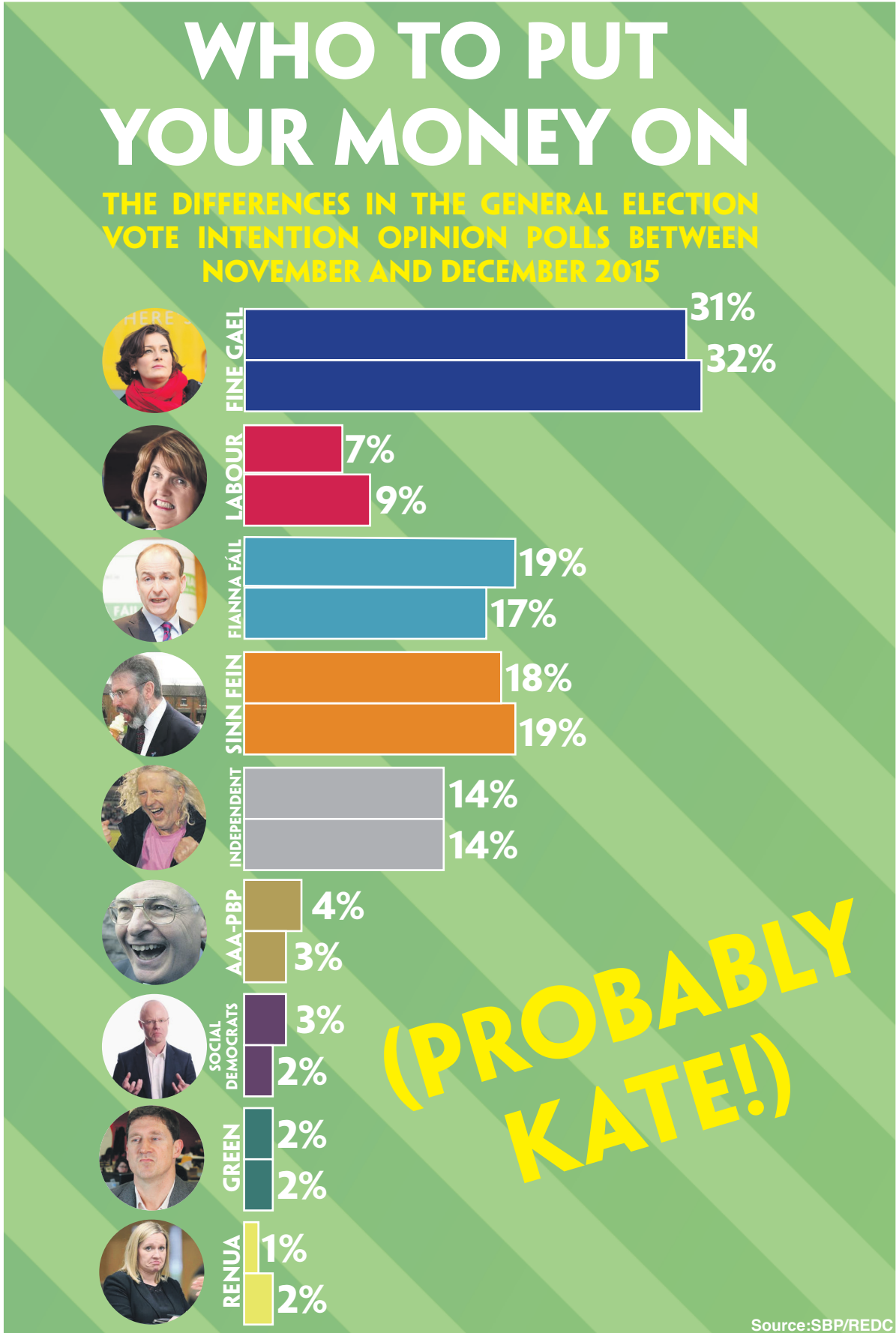
Other measures in that budget that were supported by the Green Party included removing the automatic entitlement of those over 70 to a medical card.

They ignored the wishes of their members when they entered into a coalition with Bertie Ahern's Fianna Fáil. Despite voting that a precondition to enter Government would be an inquiry into irregularities surrounding the Corrib gas project, the party simply abandoned this commitment in the talks following the election.

It is worth remembering that a vote for the Green Party this time would be a vote for a party that played a central part in allowing Ireland's economic crisis to take shape.



Image: The Green Party of Ireland Comhaontas Glas Flickr





# Opinion

## My own country couldn't facilitate our choices when we needed it most

### Kate O'Connell

Choice is great. Choice is considering what you want and making a decision, knowing that by doing so you're going one way and not another. Post-choice, you have to live with that decision.

I benefited from a free education system in Ireland, and I chose to work hard in school and go on to college. At third-level in a UK university, I met a nice man and we chose to be together. We got married when I was 27, eight years ago.

My mother said: "If you wait until you can afford to have kids, you'll never have them."

We tried, and we failed. We cried and mourned the loss of what could have been, and then we resolved to try again.

I was 30 getting pregnant for the second time, in a stable relationship, healthy and employed.

When the 20-week scan showed the foetus had serious and visible birth defects, we cried again.

I remember walking out the door of The Coombe and my husband saying: "We can fix this, don't worry, we'll get the best help available."

I shook my head and thought, what choice do we have?

Our choices were limited. We could have a test to see if the foetus had any chance of survival. We could continue on for another 20 weeks and see what would arrive. If we wanted to, we couldn't get a termination in our home country.

We didn't expect to be googling images of birth defects and researching UK hospitals, but we wanted to know our options and what we were dealing with.

We made a choice.

We had the test, which had a 20pc chance of spontaneous miscarriage. When we discovered that the foetus had no genetic defects, just a physical one, we considered survival rates, possible health outcomes and the quality of life the foetus could expect should it survive the pregnancy, the birth and the complicated surgeries.

We also considered our own sit-



Image: Damien Eagers

uation. Would we be able to cope if all the things that could go wrong went wrong?

We contacted experts in surgery, paediatrics, neonatal clinicians and gastroenterological specialists. Our foetus had a 10pc chance of being born alive, surviving surgery and living a normal, unaffected life.

We chose to continue.

The hardest part was dealing with people, well-meaning, excited and happy people, who smiled fondly at my bump and asked had we chosen a name, or what sex the foetus was.

Every day, on my way home from work, I'd pull in to a housing estate in Rathfarnham and sob hot,

bitter tears over the steering wheel. Then I'd collect myself and head home to my husband, not wanting him to see my weakness and my fear of the unknown.

We chose a name.

Pierce was born on September 2, 2010. He spent 31 days in Crumlin, the first week with his guts outside his body, as doctors attempted to fit them inside him and close the hole in his abdominal wall.

He was released to our care and we took him home. He is starting primary school next month.

All of our lives are shaped by choice, and the choices we make, to choose one road or another.

I had all of the things I needed

to make the choice to continue with the pregnancy.

I had a good job, a loving and stable relationship. I had a good education, a large group of friends and family and I had support.

I had excellent contacts across many medical fields, both in Ireland and abroad. I had enough money to help make my choice easier, whether I had chosen to stay pregnant or not.

If it had been the case that the foetus had serious genetic as well as physical defects, meaning it had zero chance of survival ex-utero, I would have chosen a different path.

We wanted to have a baby. We didn't want to have to make diffi-

cult choices, but we had to.

One of the worst parts of the whole experience was realising that when we needed it most, our country couldn't facilitate our choices and support us through them.

When my husband said "we can fix this", he genuinely thought that we could do that here, close to our families and with the help of our trusted and caring doctors.

It was only when we sat down at home and talked about it that the incredulity set in.

What hope is there for other people, in similar or worse situations than us? What would you do if you were the victim of sexual violence, or incest, resulting in a pregnancy?

My husband, the smartest and most considerate man I know, realised the full weight and inequality of these questions with a heavy heart.

The arguments against "allowing" terminations in Ireland are fraught with emotional and hysterical statements from people who fail to consider the reality: that personal and incredibly difficult situations arise here on a daily basis.

For too long Ireland has had a culture of secrecy and shame, surrounding this island like the cold and miserable waters that so many of its women cross.

We condemned our "fallen women" to church-run (and state-subsidised) prisons, punished them for the sin of sex and the flaw of being female.

We sold their children like puppies to foreign homes, or enslaved their "bastard" offspring in industrial schools to be preyed upon by the power-wielding authority.

Thousands of lives destroyed, for generations - and these are people who are "pro-life"?

It is time for the men of Ireland to stand with their sisters, their wives and girlfriends, their mummies and their daughters and say: "We've had enough."

It is time for the women of Ireland to stand with each other and say: "We want a choice."

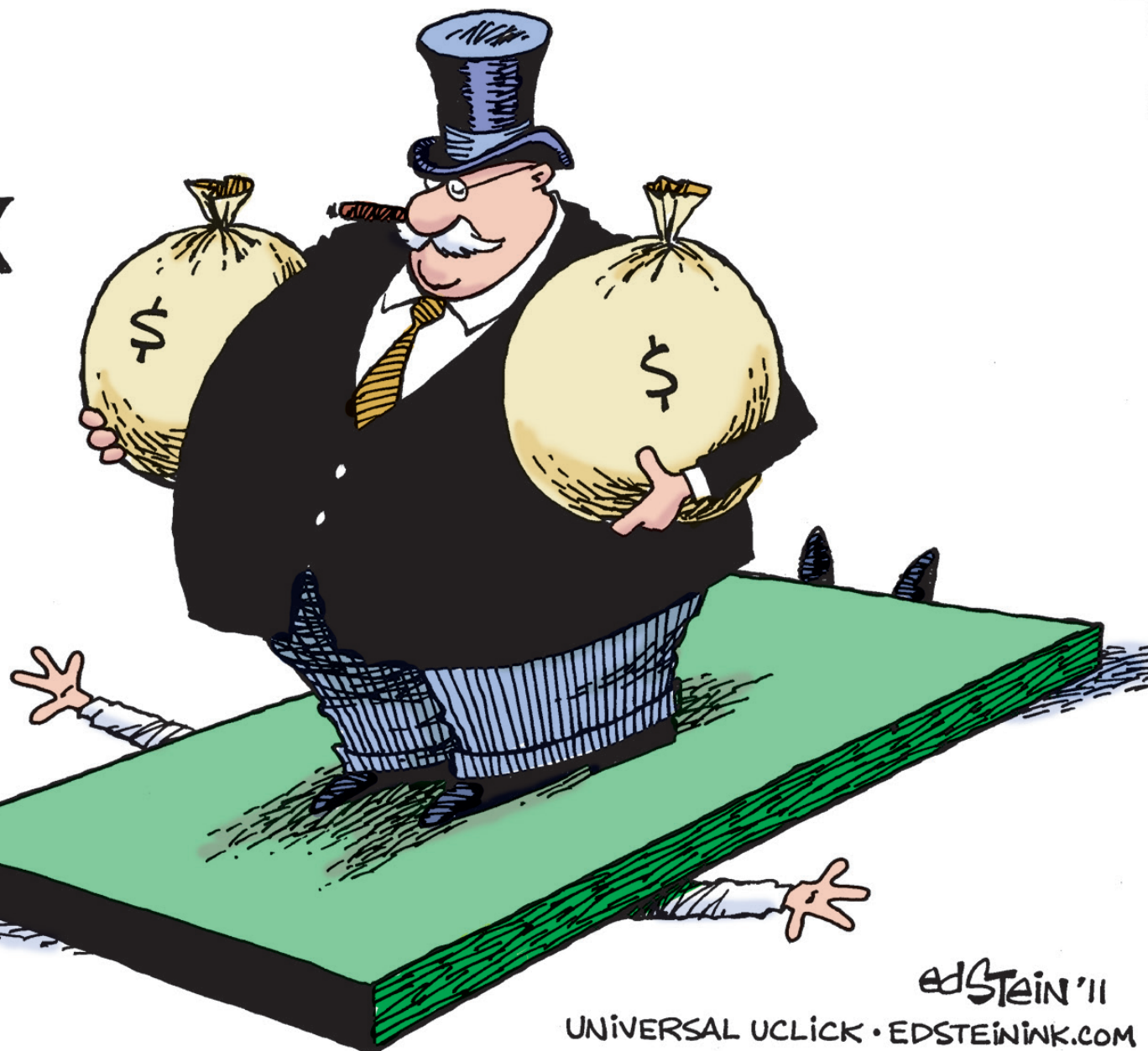
Choose life, and choose choice.

Kate O'Connell is a pharmacist and businesswoman and the only female Fine Gael member of Dublin City Council. She was selected last April to contest the general election in Dublin Bay South. A mother of two, she is expecting her third child this autumn.

**This article first appeared in the Irish Independent on 4th August 2015**



## HOW THE FLAT TAX WORKS



# “Disastrous” flat tax unworkable and unfair

**Theresa  
Newman**

**N**ow that the country is experiencing rapid economic growth, Fine Gael will continue to reform the tax system to boost employment, reward work and fund high-quality public services.

To safeguard our hard-won economic stability, Fine Gael will implement this reform package gradually and consistently over the life of the next government so that everyone in society can benefit from our success.

The last thing the country needs is an economic experiment like the “Flat Tax” espoused by Renua.

The Flat Tax is based on the

“trickle-down” economic theories of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan which have completely failed to improve living standards for ordinary workers and the middle classes while proving disastrous for the social fabric in the UK and US.

Renua openly admit that the Flat Tax will increase taxes for lower paid workers many of whom are young people trying to save for a home and start a family. Without any evidence-based projections, Renua claim that the Flat Tax will increase economic growth sufficiently to compensate for the higher taxes.

Can we afford to take that risk - and how much higher can economic growth be than it already is under a Fine Gael government? We are now growing as fast as China.

The real evidence is that where a Flat Tax experiment has been tried, it has led to higher income

**“The last thing the country needs is an economic experiment like the “Flat Tax” espoused by Renua.**

taxes for lower paid, middle-income and younger workers. It also leads to increased VAT and other taxes to compensate for the lower overall tax revenue.

Renua cite Hong Kong as an example of the success of a Flat Tax regime but in fact, Hong Kong has several rates of income tax. They also cite Slovakia as having introduced a Flat Tax regime in 2004, but neglect to say that Slovakia abandoned this flat tax policy by introducing a second rate of tax in 2013. The fact is that no advanced economy has a flat tax system and nor should we.

The country needs lower marginal tax rates to retain our most talented people and attract returning emigrants. Fine Gael believes that middle and higher income earners deserve to share in the fruits of economic growth through lower taxes and the elimination of the USC.

They also believe that it is vital to encourage younger and lower paid employees into work with low taxes.

They believe in a progressive tax system that is fair so we can maintain the priceless social cohesion that helped us achieve the current economic recovery. Finally they believe that we must take a prudent approach so that we can reduce taxes and improve public services in a sustainable manner.

It is down to the will of the people, and it's their ultimate decision who they elect this spring. They will be tasked with electing a government who can steer our country towards a more equal, more developed and more progressive future. The time for a steady hand at the wheel is now.



## Opinion

# Your vote is your voice - make sure it's heard

**Etain  
Hobson**

There appears to be a bias developing within the Ireland against the mainstream parties that have populated our government since the foundation of the state. This is not necessarily a new trend.

However, observation of recent polls, and the success of Independents and small parties in recent by-elections and local elections, suggests that the trend is growing.

While having a diverse political landscape is not something to shy away from it must also be considered alongside the instability it can create. This country has gone through years of turmoil and we do not need a situation where the balance of power lies in the hands of one or two TDs holding the government to ransom over issues of significance to their constituency that do not serve the national interest.

We cannot forget that those elected to Dáil Éireann must serve the entire country, not just deal with issues in their own constituency that will ensure their re-election.

With at least 9 candidates running in Dublin Bay South in the 2016 General Election, there is a large and varied selection of candidates putting themselves forward. The responsibility on us, as voters, is to elect the candidates best equipped to serve us in Dublin Bay South and the rest of the citizens of Ireland. When it comes to choosing the best candidate for you, you must look past party bias and anti-party bias and look at the individual asking for your vote.

Find someone you can connect with. Who you feel understands the issues in society that are affecting you and your family. You have to look at what they have to say for themselves and the experiences they have had in their lives. A candidate who has experienced the same struggles as local people and is dealing with the problems that average Irish people are dealing with it is in a far better place to represent the people of Dublin Bay South than a candidate who is a career politician or who has no experience working in the real world.

When you have candidates who have experience living, working and raising children in this constituency then you know they can relate to the life that many of us are living.

While it is vitally important that



Image: Sam Pearson

we uphold our integrity and vote for the candidates we support, it is also crucial that our votes have meaning. I don't want my vote to go towards someone who will spend the next five years sitting on the opposition benches.

There is nothing wrong with wanting the person you vote for to have a voice in the Dáil, in a government party.

In order for change to be achieved in the lifetime of a government it is almost essential for it to come from the government benches.

There is no reason to deny a candidate a vote when you feel they represent you well, simply because of the party they represent. It can only benefit us when those who vote fully consider all of the options available instead of ruling out candidates based on the party they represent.

For too long our Oireachtas has been mainly made up of a single demographic of older men that drastically fail to represent the diversity of Irish society, and in particular, the women of Ireland. We have a greater opportunity than ever be-

fore to have a more representative Dáil and it is vital that we take this opportunity. When our government is more representative of the different groups of our society everyone will benefit.

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**“  
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side of established political parties to find a candidate willing to go against the grain.

It is through the opening of minds and diversification within the main political parties that change has been and can be achieved.

If you look at the recent marriage equality referendum, that was achieved in part by a minority of people speaking out within traditionally more conservative parties and engaging with others in a way that resulted in much more widespread support for equal marriage. When that was combined with the hard work of many Irish citizens it resulted in wonderful win for Irish society and Irish people.

You do not have to fight the system from the outside; we can change it from the inside.

One of the most important aspects of a successful government is stability. The risk of electing a government populated with independents and small parties at the expense of stability cannot be diminished.

What we do not need is 158 TDs with single issues that they

deem more important than any other. What we need are representatives who fit a different profile, and for those people to be in a position that enables their voices to be heard. You do not have to fight the establishment to have your voice heard and neither do your representatives.

Your vote is your voice and by using it in protest you are not giving it its full power.

Elect people who have the power to create change, not just the power to be an opposition TD. The responsibility lies with us to ensure that the next government is a successful one, so that the pain of the last few years can stay in the past and not be relived.

We must consider all the candidates on the basis of how they represent themselves and the power that they will have if elected.

We owe it to ourselves to elect our best representatives and not to vote in protest.



# Comment

## Letters to the Editor

### No way we won't pay

Madam,

There is no case - no case whatsoever for water charges in Ireland - nor in any part of Ireland, at that. This is a country where each and every year 1 metre of water falls on us from the sky; so each hectare of Ireland is endowed with 10,000,000 litres of water per year - yes 10 million litres!

So there can be no law against digging a well or putting a barrel under a down-pipe.

It is a totally different matter if you ask the boy next door to fetch you a bucket of water from the well in the spring field. He will do it once but not twice, unless you pay him for his time and effort. And isn't he right?

What duty in any way has he to carry water to you - and after you have used it to carry it away - only a total idiot would do this without fee...

The water charges are not for water. Rather, they are for that great mark of modern civilisation - called plumbing. Water, into your house and out again, via a sewerage system, town hydration, urban sewage management, and all the engineering expertise that goes with them...and we shouldn't expect to have to pay for that!

OK fair enough, let's go back to how it was in the tenements in 1900 and before. We simply won't pay for water at a fiver a week, are you joking?

### Ain't no sunshine

Madam,

There is little governing in the sunshine and much muddling in the dark in the recently released Renua manifesto.

Flat taxes sound appealing until someone does the maths, which invariably shows that, no matter which version we're talking about, a major part of the tax burden shifts from the well off to the low and middle-income workers.

We have a long-standing tradition of progressive taxation in this country, in which those with the most pay a higher percentage than those with less, on the theory that the rich don't need as much of their income for necessities and can afford to part with a slightly higher portion of



Image: Shutterstock

their wealth.

The rich, as you might suspect, would prefer a different structure. The counter-argument that they dish up is that the rich need every cent so they can create jobs for the rest of us. The fact that the policy was championed and then abandoned by UKIP speaks volumes.

Le meas,  
**Thomas Daly**

Well a fiver a day for cigarettes - couldn't live without an auld fag. Twenty quid a week for four lousy pints, but sure what's that - ten quid a week for the telly, of course.

But no, NOT for water - as I said, it should be free. The sewers and the water pipes are all for the others - so all the others should pay for them.

Is mise le meas,  
**Michael Newman**

### A more engaged electorate

Madam,

I was delighted and surprised by the wonderful

result in the marriage equality referendum last year.

I never in my lifetime expected to see such an outpouring of support and love for the gay community here in Ireland, nor had I witnessed the mass movement of voters coming back to our shores to vote before.

I wonder if all the people who registered, and then came out to vote in that referendum will make that trip to the ballot box again this Spring?

If they do, we could end up having one of the most interesting elections of our time.

Is mise,  
**Máire Uí Caidhn**

## Election Times

### Are we facing an economic nosedive?

There is a pervading sense of excitement in political circles, as the election looms and the bells start to toll.

But it's not just the Irish media who will be watching the political Hunger Games unfold. The eyes of the international markets will be focussed on Ireland as the stability of the country and its future economic growth hangs in the balance.

The rise of left-wing parties in Greece and Portugal have done little to allay their fears. In Portugal when the centre-right party who steered the country through its bailout package was unable to form a majority, a minority government made up of the country's main centre-left party, the Socialist Party (PS) formed a coalition with the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE).

The prospect of a left-wing government inflected by a strong radical-left grouping sounded alarm bells on international markets and in Brussels, and on the back of the election result, Portuguese borrowing costs rose.

The Greek crisis deepened following Syriza's rise to power, consigning the Greeks to even more austerity than the party had originally opposed.

If Ireland follows suit and elects a mish-mash of socialist/left/anti-austerity parties, as seems to be the trend among the most hard-hit EU countries, we could end up facing into a similar economic nosedive.

The Taoiseach will have to put forward his party as the best option for stability, and hope that the left-wing parties are sufficiently discredited by their economic policies, in order to form a government.

## Youth inequality: reality with bite

With job creation occurring in 12 of the 14 main sectors of the economy, the challenge of reducing the unemployment rate further is one that this government needs to rise to.

Already at 8.8%, down from 15.1% at the height of the recession, the unemployment stats are encouraging. As it stands, that 8.8% equals 190,600 people who are unemployed in Ireland, which is 2.9% better than the Eurozone average.

The boom might not be back, but times certainly aren't as tough for some people as they were in the depths of the recession. However, for people under 26 who are job seekers, the rates of social welfare available to them are fundamentally unfair. Couple this with the rising property prices and the lack of well-paying jobs on offer for young people, and you have a disenchanted and struggling youth population.

One of the jobs the next government must do is address the inequality that exists between the different age groups. It's not the under-35s fault that they were born at the wrong time and they shouldn't be punished for risks that they didn't take.

Youth unemployment is more prevalent in Ireland than unemployment in general. The youth unemployment rate in Ireland averaged 18.48 per cent from 1983 until 2015, reaching an all-time high of 31.1 per cent in June 2012. It still stands at 19.8 per cent.

A CSO report last Autumn showed that the youngest households in Ireland have ten times less wealth than the oldest households.

The next government needs to make affordable housing and a decent-paying job an attainable reality and not just a distant dream for our young people.

Dismissing young people as non-voting party animals would be a foolish move, and they won't have trouble making their votes count.

*How to get in touch with the editor*

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*It will not be published without your express permission.*



# Politics

## The XX Factor: Dublin Bay South in focus

The whole country has gone women-mad. As some parties scramble to find female candidates and others scramble to fight female candidates, the pervading public sentiment is, why?

Gender quotas shouldn't be necessary, particularly in developed countries where equal access to education and employment exist. If we want our country to be run well, we need to elect the best people for the job - regardless of gender.

"They must be qualified!", squawk some. "But what qualifications do you need?", counter others.

None, to be honest. There's no entrance exam to the Oireachtas.

### An Ideal World

Ideally, we'd have independently successful, honest, civic-minded characters capable of developing policy and managing staff, preferably with an excellent track record in community development, international diplomacy and project management.

Only since the inflammatory gender quotas were introduced has the focus suddenly shifted onto a candidate's personal qualifications. We're all for equality - but if it means less men in power, forget it!

The 30% rule for female candidates isn't even 'equality' - even the most mathematically challenged knows that, but it's a good start.

What exactly do we fear will happen to the country by implementing quotas?

The men haven't exactly championed economic stability or socially responsible initiatives - women's rights in Ireland are pitted from



Image: Sam Pearson

abroad, and it's only lately we've come around to the idea that perhaps gay people should have equal rights to marriage like the rest of us.

Yes, men can represent women - and women might prefer to vote for a man in their area. Democracy is great that way. Simply encouraging more women to contest elections doesn't alter the principle of democratic representation.

### Spotlight on Dublin Bay South

Over half of the people living in

Dublin Bay South are female, according to 2011 census figures.

The last election returned only one woman (Lucinda Creighton) for the area, out of a possible four seats, and while she remains a TD, she left her job in government by voting against the Protection of Life during Pregnancy Bill. The Bill was seen by many as a progressive step for maternal health in Ireland.

She now sits in opposition to the government and Red C polls indicate that her new party is unlikely to take more than one or two seats. Despite this, Creighton is contesting the election again, so Dublin

Bay South could end up with no female representatives at all.

Happily though, there are other women running.

Cllr Kate O'Connell is considered a good person to back, and a good bet to place, as the odds shorten on her to take the seat.

Bookies have slashed the odds on Kate, from 3/1 to 13/8 and she has a large following among the business community and among medical professionals, due to her pharmacy qualifications and her success at running two businesses.

Her outspoken pro-choice stance on abortion as well as her economically sound arguments regarding

public expenditure on Dublin City Council have endeared her to the more socially liberal and economically conservative electorate in Dublin Bay South.

She was elected first in the country for Fine Gael in the local elections, taking her seat on DCC where she was eventually joined by an all-male group of Fine Gael Councillors.

Glenna Lynch is running for the Social Democrats, she has grown-up children and she runs an interior design business. Perhaps best known for her attack on Sean Gallagher during a televised presidential debate in 2011, she is very active on social media - particularly on Twitter.

She is known to be a good media performer and unafraid to speak her mind. However, the Social Democrats proposal to abolish water charges would likely founder in any coalition with a larger party and this policy could damage her prospects in an area where it's widely accepted that infrastructure and utilities need to be paid for. Paddy Power has her at 25/1.

Annette Mooney is running for the People Before Profit Alliance. She claims not to be a "conventional politician". Having trained as a nurse and worked in the community, she now works as a secondary school teacher.

She identifies as a Socialist and is anti-water charges and anti-property taxes. She is in favour of introducing rent controls and developing a new health service system. Bookies have her at 100/1, making her the least likely of any candidate in Dublin Bay South to take a seat.

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# Analysis

## A changing of the guard in the constituency

One of the most interesting constituencies to examine from a demographical and political point of view is Dublin Bay South. There are a total of four Dáil seats up for grabs in the election, with one incumbent, Ruairi Quinn, not seeking re-election.

There are more women (51.3%) than men living in the area (48.7%), according to the latest available figures, out of the total 116,396 people who call this region home.

Marginally more men are

living in areas such as Wood Quay and the Royal Exchange, and more women are living in Terenure, Rathmines and the Rathfarnham 'zones' of the constituency.

It is estimated at the time of going to print, that in the region of 67,700 people are actually registered and eligible to vote in the General Election.

With this in mind, it is important to look back to 2011 and examine what happened on polling day. Back then, the area was smaller and did not include parts

of Terenure and Harold's Cross. The registered electorate made up 58,217, and on the day just over 60% of them turned out to cast their votes.

That was an election that brought people out in anger, in revolt at the mishandling of Ireland's finances and the loss of our economic sovereignty.

Will we see the same turnout this time? While some continue to doubt the fiscal strategy of the current government, there is a cautiously pro-government sentiment

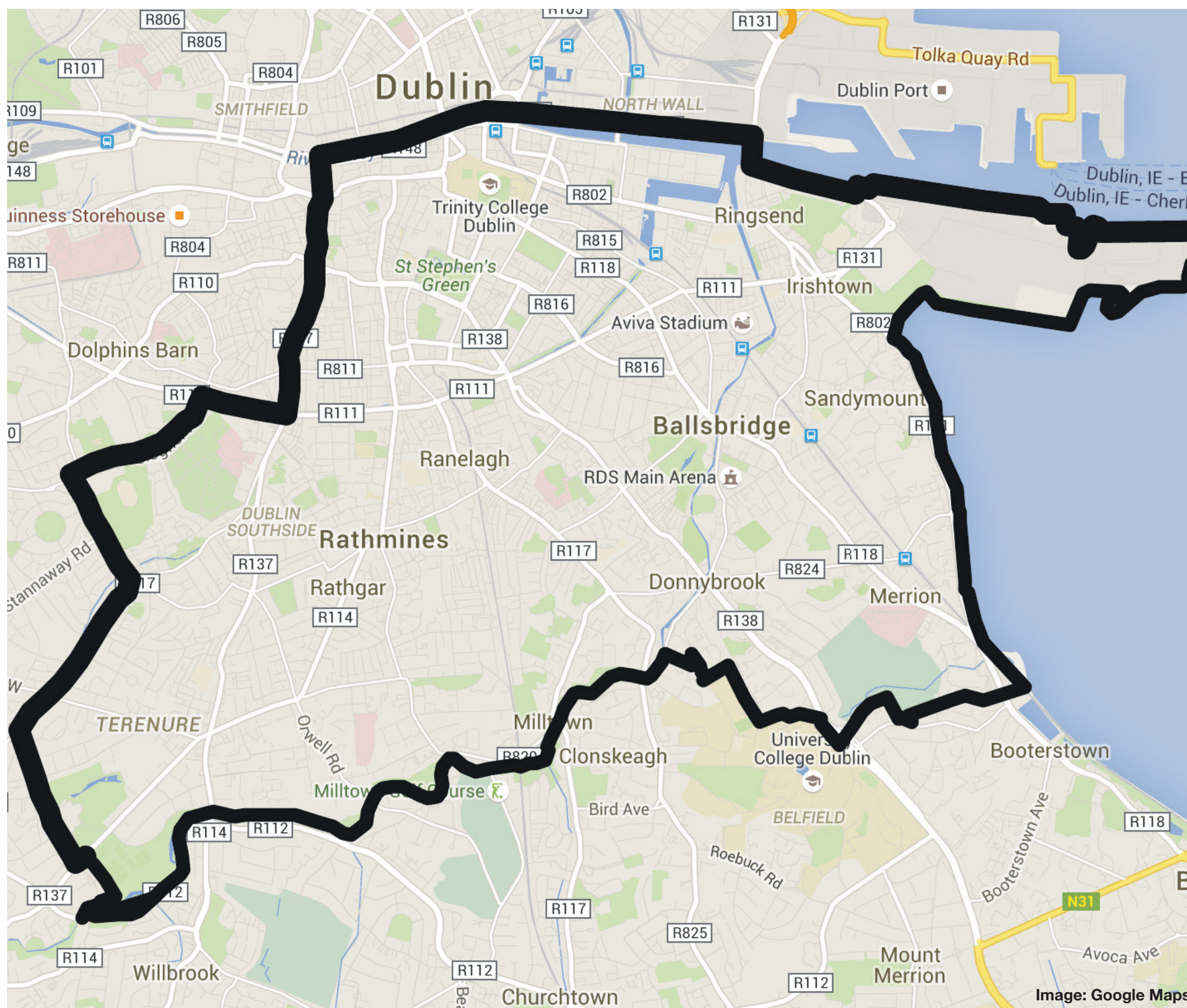
in the air that didn't exist during the local elections. There is much talk of economic recovery, of social progress and of hope.

Dublin Bay South was the constituency that returned the highest percentage "yes" vote in the marriage equality referendum, at 74.91%.

In spite of that fantastic groundswell in support for marriage equality, that number represents 58.02% turnout - so the question that arises is, did anger make more people come out than

love? Or is it simply that different people engaged?

It will be interesting to see what sort of motivation is behind the turnout in the coming election. The anger has dissipated somewhat and there's no love stories to coax voters from their couches - so will they come out to "secure the recovery"? Whatever their motivation, in this most liberal of constituencies, we could see an almost complete change of guard in Garret Fitzgerald-land.





# Satire

## Green Party to implement Hot Air Policy

**T**he Green Party plans to introduce a new green transport network in the form of hot air balloons.

The network will span the country and will initially be fuelled by the increasing levels of nonsense being laid out in political manifestos. The Green Party will be championing the new Metro Environment Shipping Scheme (MESS) if they return to government.

“We are hugely experienced in the area of MESS and look forward to supporting its development for the next five years”, said a spokesperson.

“The startup costs will have to be borne by the taxpayer, and then people can use their Leap cards to pay for trips around the country. We expect that the fares will be in line with other transport systems,



Image: Shutterstock

though that will be dependant upon the uptake of the scheme by Irish citizens”.

Ireland already produces enough hot air to power a country

the size of Brazil, and the Greens are keen to harness that energy so as to avoid penalties for their emissions.

Despite politicians being the

main source of hot air emissions in the country, the penalties would have to be paid out of the public finances too.

“This will be another fine

MESS to get ourselves into and I’m hopeful the voting public realise that when they go to the polls this spring,” said a Green Party official.

## “Everyone must take average industrial wage regardless of contribution,” say Sinn Féin

The newly elected Sinn Féin government plans to standardise pay for all public and private sector employees, so that everyone receives the same amount of money to live on regardless of education, qualifications or experience.

“As a party we are committed to equal pay. All of our elected representatives are paid the average industrial wage and they have never complained about that. In fact, no one ever complains in Sinn Féin about anything - we are a party of peace and harmony”, said a Sinn Féin councillor.

The new pay plans would see all citizens receiving €35,817 each, from the moment they leave secondary school or college and enter the workforce. People who earn in excess of that amount will have their wages docked at source, for redistribution amongst other citizens, or “comrades” as they will be called on their payslips.

There would be no increase in the wage for those who attend third-level education or pursue trades, which would likely see a drop in the number of students attending colleges. The party said this was to be welcomed, as

third-level funding is a huge drain on public finances.

“The less money that we spend on education, the more money can be channelled into supporting the cause for Irish freedom,” said a spokesperson.

Other parties have expressed disbelief at the proposal, claiming that the plan would actually affect

Irish people’s freedom more than anything else.

Health services will likely see a reduction in senior-level staff costs as consultants seek better remuneration abroad, but this should not affect treatments for Taoiseach Gerry Adams, who will avail of the best medical care abroad where possible.



Image: Sinn Féin Flickr

## Renua pledge border controls to combat religious extremism

Renua have committed to tighten border controls as fears mount over the ongoing migrant crisis.

However, their approach differs from other developed EU countries as they plan to prevent Irish people from leaving the country, as well as blocking access to migrants.

“We want to prevent Irish people, and particularly women,

from getting the boat or the plane abroad. We believe that by forcing people to stay here and work, we will grow our tax base sufficiently to bridge the €9.5bn shortfall in the budget that the introduction of the flat tax will cause”, said a spokesperson for the party.

Migrants who wish to enter the country will have to pass strict admission exams, parts of which will have questions like “Do you agree that dressage horses should be tax-exempt?” and “Spot the difference between Renua policies and American Republican party policies”.

The border controls are part of a wide-ranging package of social reforms being put forward by the party.

“We’re also proposing a number of initiatives to prevent unwanted pregnancies, such as forming abstinence advisory councils and issuing copulation permission forms”, said a spokesperson.

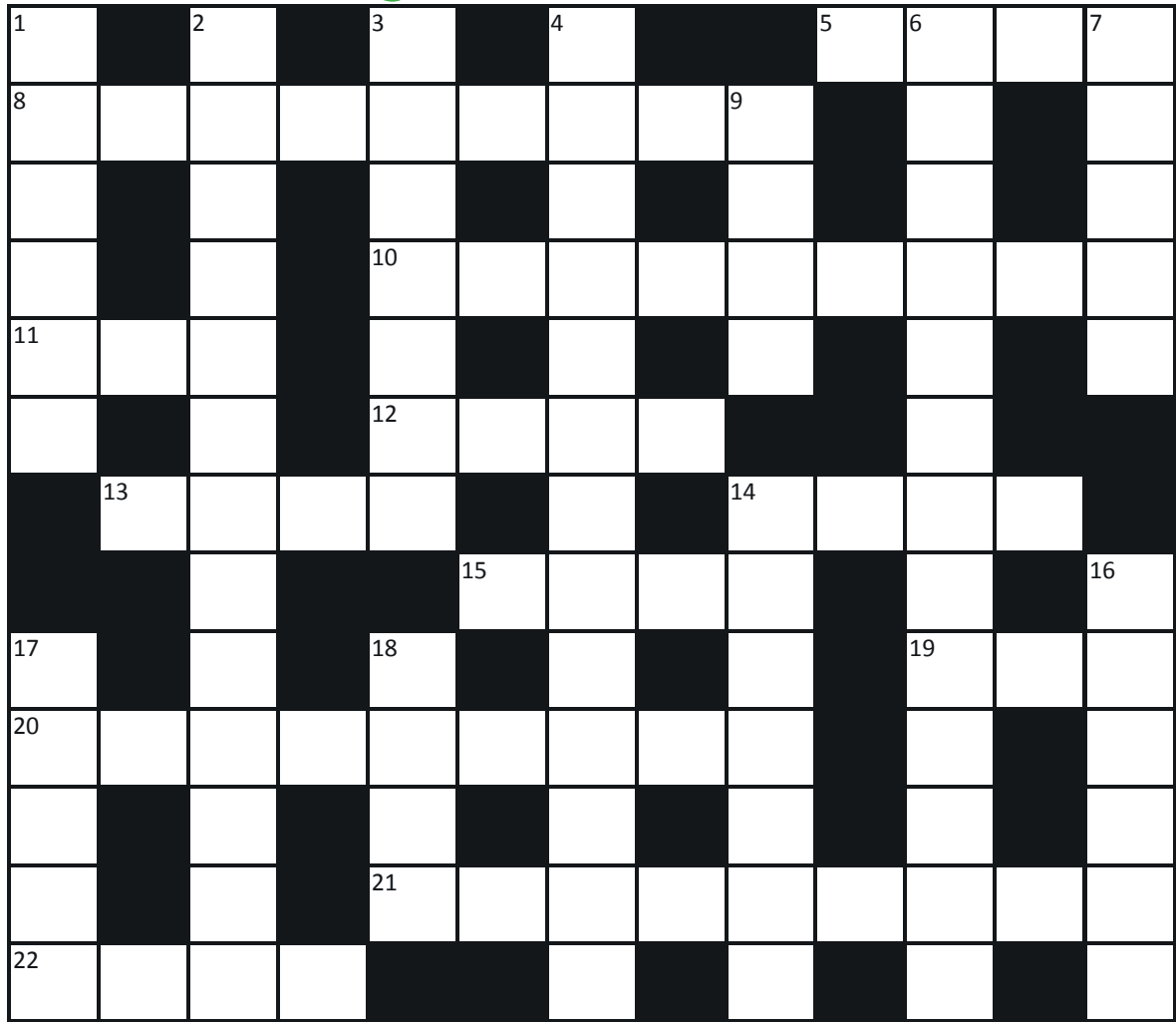
There are also plans to provide free ponies for the under-sixes and to introduce a radical paleo diet menu for primary school meal programmes.

“  
**Spot the difference between Renua policies and American Republican party policies**



# Puzzles

## Cross Enough?



## Across

- 5 Chances, cf. evens (4)
- 8 Daniel O’Connell (9)
- 10 A modern portmanteau; to convey information in a condescending manner (9)
- 11 Provides public health services in Ireland (3)
- 12 Joint of meat that includes the vertebrae, pork perhaps (4)
- 13, 14 Largest Irish parliamentary party (4,4)
- 15 Shrek? (4)
- 19 At this moment (3)
- 20 Shone with a slightly wavering light (9)
- 21 Zone for undeveloped, wild, or agricultural land (5,4)
- 22 Irish pageant contestant (4)

## Down

- 1 Phytophthora infestans (6)
- 2 Dr., IBM, DVD, lb., ASAP etc. (13)
- 3 David, elected Northern Ireland First Minister in 1998 (7)
- 4 Direct debit, with payment arranged by the payer (8, 5)
- 6 This coffee is no use in an all-nighter (13)
- 7 A holy Paul, Peter or Patrick (5)
- 9 Prime for eating (4)
- 14 Male horse, not for breeding anymore (7)
- 16 Goodies (6)
- 17 Singing RnB on the stage, or just showing you to your seat? (5)
- 18 Airborne pollution (4)

## Horoscopes

### Gemini



Keep your head on straight. Upcoming plans are causing you to get a bit distracted right now, and that's with good reason. Keep your mind on that little square in the calendar marked with the election date. But, start thinking about what you'll be doing after it. It

won't be easy at first, but you will soon have your mind occupied with other, non-political things. The more you can live in the moment, the more fun you can have.

### Aquarius



Rather than being concerned with what the voters think, or what the polls say today, why not learn something new, like farming? You have ideas to offer, but a strong connection with the earth and the animals could be just what

you need. Don't open up and share any more than you might normally be comfortable with. We all know how you feel about everything by now. You like to take the conversation in all directions, from extreme right to slightly less right, so trust that - it (might) pay off.

### Taurus



Don't be surprised if you're bored with stuff right now. Your soul is looking for more inquiries, but the right way to satisfy it is to go out into the world in search of support. It may seem counter-intuitive, but the best way to satisfy your

restlessness is to spend as much of your day canvassing as possible. On a good day, you'll have room for two in your life. By being alone you can only get so far - so be clear about what you really want.

### Capricorn



This is going to be a very good detail-planning day for you. Your mind is crystal clear, and your day will be free from any major distractions. If you need to take care of any travel

arrangements, this is the right time to do it. Everyone you need to talk to will be available, your preferred dates will be available, and if you lay on some of your trademark charm, you can expect some wonderful charm in return -- and maybe even an upgrade waiting for you upon your arrival!

### Leo



Things will seem topsy-turvy when the people who usually don't see things your way suddenly agree with everything you say. No, just kidding. People you can always trust to be in your corner are now questioning your

suggestions! Have you changed, or has everyone else? Odds are you are the one who is realising this mightn't be as easy as you thought. You're learning how important it is for you to understand your audience. To win people over, you have to think like them, and they might have longer memories than you expect.

### Aries



The charm you have today has no bounds -- you'll be making people smile left and right, whether you're trying to or not. Obviously, this is a great day to make the most of your interpersonal connections. People will

have an incredibly hard time saying no to you right now. So if you're looking for an introduction to a new cutie or powerful business contact, ask away! Your request will not only be honored, but the person you ask will do whatever they can to make it happen.

### Cancer



Your brain is getting active right now. So much so, that a few of your ideas will be colliding into each other! Don't be surprised if the gossip and idle chit-chat going on around you bores you to tears. You want stimulation! To get it, you

might have to strike out on your own and search for a unique experience that will give your brain the challenge it wants. Visit an art gallery, library or any other place designed for contemplation and thought. It will be quite rewarding for you.

### Virgo



Any impulse buys you make today might provide you with a few hours of fun, but you can forget about any long lasting value -- so make sure you don't spend a lot of money on them! If lasting

enjoyment is what you're after, you don't have to spend any money at all to get it. Taking a walk with friends or visiting a favorite relative are all free, and they are all going to fill you with a calm and enduring kind of happiness -- a happiness you just can't buy.

### Libra



Right about the time when you think that today's going to be a boring day full of regular sights and sounds, you will get involved in a lovely little flirting match! It might be a cutie you've had your eye on, or it might be the person

you've been seeing for quite a while. But it might also be a total stranger you'll never ever see again. Either way, have some fun! Don't take things too seriously. Enjoy your ability to put a smile on someone else's face.

### Scorpio



Today one of your relationships will reach a crossroads -- although you might not have an awareness of it until you have already gone one way while they've gone the other. Don't

let this growing sense of emotional distance make you lose hope, though. Sometimes people have to go off in their own direction to find what they need. This could be a temporary separation, you know. Roads that diverge can come back around again. Your relationship is not going to end.

### Sagittarius



It's easy to stay true to your goals in life right now because you're having so much fun pursuing them! Who knew that working toward your dream could involve so much laughter and

friendship? Just because there's a smile on your face doesn't mean you're not working your head off, so don't you dare feel guilty for having such a good time when some of your friends are struggling. Your path is one you have created for yourself. You are reaping what you have sown.

### Pisces



Relationship issues might be on your mind today, especially when you see problems arise in a partnership you've always admired. Their tensions will cause you start wondering 'If they can hit a rocky patch, what about us?' It's

fine to think about it, but don't let it cloud over all your thinking today. Just because things could go wrong doesn't mean that they will go wrong. Before you start worrying and wringing your hands, wait until there is something to worry about.





FINE GAEL

# Cllr. KATE O'CONNELL



## Campaign for Kate

working with Eoghan Murphy TD

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