

IRELAND'S  
WORLD CUP  
DREAMS  
DASHED

Gerry Thornley  
Sports Monday



“This land is wonderful for wine, one of the best in Israel,’ says Eliav Hillel. He calls this ‘Israel’, despite it being internationally recognised as Palestinian territory

Sally Hayden  
World News



RE-TURN IS  
STILL RAKING  
IN THE CASH  
+ READERS'  
MIXED FEELINGS

Conor Pope  
Pricewatch

Council  
route to  
presidential  
nomination  
‘unlikely’

Members of 10 councils meeting today say they are unlikely to back a candidate  
Kerry County Council likely to back Gareth Sheridan but he needs three more

HARRY MCGEE  
Political Correspondent

The path for Independents to contest the presidential election will narrow considerably today, as many councillors due to hear their candidacy pitches say endorsements are “highly unlikely”.

Today has been described as a “super primary” day, with 11 councils due to hold special meetings to consider nominating a candidate.

Three of the most prominent Independent candidates – entrepreneur Gareth Sheridan, conservative commentator Maria Steen and social media activist Nick Delehanty – have been lobbying councillors in target local authorities over the weekend. Each needs to be nominated by four councils to become a candidate.

Mr Sheridan looks likely to get the first of a required four nominations when Kerry County Council votes this morning. It deferred its vote after hearing from prospective candidates last week. His candidacy is being backed by Independent councillors but will depend upon abstentions from Fianna Fáil and Labour council members.

**Abstain**  
Vice-chair of the council Marie Moynihan (Labour) confirmed she would abstain in the vote. “There is a sense in the council that Gareth Sheridan might get through,” she said yesterday.

During the course of today, 10 other councils will hear pitches from aspiring candidates hoping to gain a place on the presidential ticket. Most will vote after their meeting, although some, such as Kildare, will defer their votes until the following week.

While Fianna Fáil has imposed no whip on its councillors, party members on local authorities in a number of counties told The Irish Times they are likely to show support for the party’s candidate, Jim Gavin, by voting against the nomination of others.

Paschal McEvoy, a Fianna Fáil member of Laois County Council, said local representa-

tives there will meet this morning to decide on a stance. There is a view locally that the party should support its own candidate, he said. Similarly, in Longford, Cllr Séamus Butler said there was support among Fianna Fáil councillors there to refrain from endorsing a candidate other than Mr Gavin.

With Fine Gael’s local authority members subject to a whipped vote, requiring them to row in behind party candidate Heather Humphreys, a Fianna Fáil “block” vote on any given council would effectively foreclose the possibility of a nomination.

Laois is a key target for Mr Sheridan, who will address its meeting today. Ms Steen is also due to address Longford County Council.

They will both address Dublin City Council at its special meeting this evening. Former MMA fighter Conor McGregor is also scheduled to address the council and several others.

In a submission Mr McGregor says he, as president, would use constitutional provisions to “restore political power to the Irish citizenry”.

Last year, Mr McGregor was ordered to pay Nikita Hand €250,000 in damages after a High Court jury found he had assaulted her in a Dublin hotel.

In July, he lost his appeal against the jury finding in favour of Ms Hand, who sued him over alleged rape at the Beacon hotel on December 9th, 2018.

Thirteen further councils have arranged for meetings to be held ahead of the final deadline for nominations on September 24th. Indications are that a route to gaining four local authority nominations will be more difficult than it was in 2018.

Yet, Fianna Fáil councillors on several councils, including in Tipperary, Leitrim, Sligo and Wexford, say they are willing to consider nominations.

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Gold Standard Roscommon fighter victorious at World Championships



■ Aoife O'Rourke kisses the gold medal she won in the women's 75kg division at the World Boxing Championships in Liverpool. The 28-year-old was dominant in her victory over Turkey's Busra Isildar, winning every round. PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

Nanoplastics may be a factor  
in Alzheimer’s rise, study finds

SEÁN DUKE

Minuscule pieces of waste plastic, thousands of times smaller than a human hair, can damage our brains and may be contributing to increasing global levels of Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease.

That’s according to a new Trinity College Dublin (TCD) study, led by Associate Professor of Biochemistry Gavin Davey, conceived of by student Devin Seward and published in the Journal of Hazardous Materials: Plastics.

The numbers worldwide with Alzheimer’s and other dementias increased by about 148 per cent from 1990 to 2019. Much of this rise has been attributed to ageing global populations and genes, but there is growing evidence that environmental pollution is a factor.

“Plastic has only been

around for 60 or 70 years, but we’ve seen a dramatic increase in neurological diseases that can’t be explained by genetics or population growth alone,” said Prof Davey.

He decided to look into links between nanoplastics and Alzheimer’s after being approached with a research proposal by Mr Seward, then a TCD undergraduate neuroscience student.

Mr Seward suggested looking at why mitochondria (the essential organelles inside each cell that generates its power) are disrupted by tiny “nanoplastics” shed by plastic cutlery and food packaging.

“Our bodies have about 7kg of mitochondria, and they’re crucial for making the energy our brains need,” said Prof Davey. “When mitochondria malfunction, it’s linked to diseases like Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s,

epilepsy and schizophrenia.”

Using rat brain tissue, the TCD team found that exposure to nanoplastics significantly inhibited the mitochondria’s ability to use oxygen and produce energy.

“We were surprised at how potent the effect was,” said Prof Davey. “The nanoplastics seemed to target the electron transport chain, a key part of the mitochondria’s energy production process.”

“This newly discovered mitochondrial mechanism of nanoplastic-induced neurotoxicity may, therefore, help to explain why rates of neurodegenerative diseases have risen in recent decades.”

Nanoplastics are everywhere: in rivers, seawater and air. People can be exposed to them while cycling in the city, using plastic cutlery or when drinking from plastic bottles.

Harris threatens  
a ‘national  
security’ issue

Gardaí using anti-terrorism legislation to catch perpetrators behind bomb threats

CONOR GALLAGHER  
and BARRY ROCHE

Violent threats against Tánaiste Simon Harris and his family are being treated as a “national security” issue by gardaí, who are employing anti-terrorism legislation to catch the perpetrators.

Gardaí now believe at least one of the threats came from overseas and have asked Interpol for assistance in co-ordinating with other police forces.

This came after officers from the Special Detective Unit, which is leading the investigation, obtained IP addresses and other identifying data relating to the accounts from where the threats originated. The data was provided by social media platforms on request from the Garda.

Details of additional threats, which were made as part of an apparently co-ordinated campaign, have also emerged.

A week ago, it was reported calls were made to three Garda stations alleging there was a bomb in Mr Harris’s home in Greystones, Co Wicklow, which he shares with his wife and two young children.

In fact, bomb threats were made to six stations. Gardaí believe the calls came from a group of men who organised the campaign on the Telegram social media platform. The Tánaiste’s home was

evacuated while Garda dog units searched the property.

The hoax bomb calls followed threats of a sexual nature made against a member of the Harris family days previously, and threats to kidnap his children the previous weekend.

The kidnapping threat resulted in the arrest of a woman for questioning who was later released.

As part of the investigations, officials have employed legislation enacted in 2023 which compels telecommunications companies to preserve and produce data “where such access is necessary for national security or law enforcement purposes”.

Gardaí have now obtained an order from a judge that requires companies, including social media platforms, to immediately “freeze” data relating to specific accounts so it can be preserved for the investigation and any possible prosecutions.

Garda sources said that such is the volume and nature of the threats that they are being treated as a national security issue. There is concern that threats of this nature, even if they are never carried out, may impair Ministers from carrying out their duties, sources said.

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Weather

Breezy start with showers or longer spells of rain, some heavy and thundery, easing in the afternoon. Highs of 13-16.

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**Planning:** Legislation is on the way to curtail delays to housing plans by judicial reviews, Jim O’Callaghan said. **Page 4**

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Business  
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**Airports:** DAA chief executive, Kenny Jacobs, would receive a settlement of about €1 million under proposals that would see him leave the role. **Page 14**

**Housing:** Over half of local authorities must at least double housing output to meet new targets. **Page 14**

Sports  
Monday

**Boxing:** The world of boxing mourned the loss of former world champion Ricky Hatton who was found dead at his home aged 46.

**Soccer:** Erling Haaland scored twice as Manchester City beat Man Utd 3-0 in the derby with Gianluigi Donnarumma making his City debut.

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