Harvey Norman®
BLACK FRIDAY
SALE NOW ON!
SEE INSIDE FOR GREAT DEALS!
535273_NIE

THE IRISH TIMES

WEEKEND EDITION

€4.20 (£3.10 Northern Ireland) irishtimes.com Saturday/Sunday, November 29/30, 2025

Keeper of the flame

'I'm not intending to try to take on Manchán's words or become a disciple of his message, but I do know that in some way I am going to keep the flame alive.'

– Aisling Rogerson, Manchán Magan's widow

Interview: Weekend
Photograph: Bryan O'Brien

Malachy Clerkin
The muddy laws of scrums

SPORT

David McWilliams
How to turn Nimbys into Yimbys

WEEKEND

Hutch could take seat due to gap in law

Criminal Assets Bureau and Revenue pursuing criminal for almost €800,000

Sipo says a new TD could take their seat without a tax clearance certificate

CONOR LALLY
Security and Crime Editor

Gerry Hutch will be able to run in next year's Dublin byelection and also take a seat in the Dáil, if he wins, due to a gap in the law obliging newly-elected TDs to have their tax affairs in order before taking their seats.

Veteran criminal Hutch (62), known as The Monk, is currently being pursued for almost €800,000 by the Criminal Assets Bureau (Cab) and Revenue.

That demand was served on him recently after a Cab-led inquiry determined he owed the money arising from allegedly undeclared income between 2006 and 2010.

The Standards in Public Office Act 2001 introduced a tax clearance requirement for members of the Dáil.

However, due to the tax demand, Hutch would not be in a position to secure a tax clearance certificate from the Revenue Commissioners.

However, the Standards in Public Office Commission (Sipo) has confirmed to The Irish Times that, despite the legislation, a newly elected TD's inability to produce a tax clearance would not block them taking their seat. And if they could not produce the certificate in time, they would not be unseated.

Should he win the Dublin Central byelection next April or May, to fill the seat of recently departed minister for finance Paschal Donohoe, Hutch would need to make a declaration within one month of the election that he is tax compliant.

Within a maximum of nine months, like all newly elected TDs, he would need to produce a tax clearance certificate.

In reply to a series of queries, Sipo said it could place such a TD under investigation for their non-tax compliance.

A report arising from such an investigation would be compiled and given to the Committee on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann. The report would also be laid before the Dáil.

"Beyond investigating the matter and providing a report to the relevant Committee on Members' Interest, the Standards in Public Office Commission does not have a role in relation to contraventions of the tax clearance provisions of the Standards in Public Office Act," Sipo told The Irish Times. "The commission has no role in terms of removing a TD from their seat."

A number of sitting TDs, including those who have served in Government, said they were unaware Sipo had no powers to take further action.

Dáil vote to suspend

Some said they had always believed while a non-tax compliant person could run in an election, they would not be able to take up their seat because of their noncompliance.

The sources said the Dáil could vote on a motion to suspend a TD, which could include, in an extreme case, voting to suspend a member until such time as they were tax compliant.

Hutch was arrested in Lanzarote last October as part of a money laundering inquiry. He was released on bail of €100,000 in early November. Though he remains under investigation there, that does not block him running in the byelection next year.

At last November's general election, he secured 3,100 first preference votes and narrowly missed out to Labour's Marie Sherlock on the fourth and final seat. He has taken to social media over the last week to tease his running in the byelection.

Why Cab, Spanish police and Sipo can't stop Hutch bid: page 12

Government may cut number of language school visas

Minister of State for Migration Colm Brophy says system is to be examined

JACK HORGAN-JONES
Political Correspondent

The Government will examine reducing the number of visas granted to students in English language schools, with the sector due to face extra scrutiny as part of ongoing reforms.

There are private concerns among some in Government that these visas may be used as a "backdoor" employment visa.

Speaking to The Irish Times, Minister of State for Migration Colm Brophy said the student visa system would be examined by the Department of Justice.

"I'm not going to prejudge the outcome of any review we're taking, but one could see a situation where there would be a higher quality system in place which might overall reduce the number of visas granted on the English language side," Mr Brophy said.

Some 60,000 student visas were issued last year by the State. The English language sector accounts for about half.

Earlier this week, Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan said the Coalition was "having discussions at present in respect of student visas".

A spokesman for Minister for Higher Education James Lawless said he wants to maintain Ireland's status as a high-quality destination for students, and has started to tighten regulations with a new quality assurance regime.

A Government source said Mr Lawless wants Ireland to be a hub for international students but "doesn't want any institution being a visa backdoor".

"This is why he is clamping down, particularly on the English language schools, to make sure the students are coming here legally, studying and contributing positively."

Another source said it was likely a reduction in student visas would be considered, with an initial focus on the English language sector.

Chief executive of language schools association English Education Ireland Lorcan O'Connor Lloyd said the sector supports strong quality assurance, oversight and clear immigration rules. He said students operate within one of the strictest compliance regimes.

He added there was no evidence programmes were being used as a "backdoor" to employment, and that challenges attributed to the sector stem from wider immigration processes. The sector would be happy to engage in a debate based on publicly available data, he said.

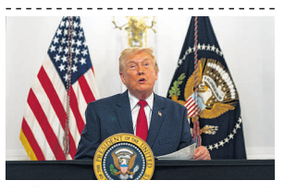
Screw tightens on migration: page 11

Home News

Education: Religious education in Northern Ireland is to be reformed following a court judgment. Page 4

Housing: The number of homeless people in Ireland reached a record high of more than 16,700. Page 4

World News



US: Donald Trump said he would 'permanently pause' migration from Third World countries. Page 14

Weather

Starting cloudy with rain or scattered showers. These may turn heavy at times with the chance of hail or thunder. They will quickly clear in the late morning with drier weather in the afternoon. Highs of 6-9 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 €4.20
Subscriptions: Tel: (01) 9203901
Email: subscribe@irishtimes.com

9 771393 351963 48
Vol. No. 52454. Saturday, November 29, 2025

Harvey Norman®
BLACK FRIDAY SALE
FINAL DAYS!
BEST PRICE GUARANTEE!*
Offers end 29/11/25. *We will match or beat any genuine competitor's advertised price on the date you purchase or within 7 days of purchase. Excludes all Apple products. Terms and conditions apply, see website for details: www.harveynorman.ie/bestprice.
534684_NIE