

BELLINGHAM CRACKS THE WHIP ON TUCHEL

Ken Early
Sports Monday



Something significant is lost when decision-making is transferred from the government to the plebs

Sinéad O'Sullivan
Opinion



THE DUTCHMAN MAKING A €4M BET ON A VINEYARD BY THE BOYNE

Killian Woods
Business Today

Alumina 'may very well' feature on next EU sanctions list

EU governments are negotiating the bloc's next round of sanctions on Russia

Mayor John Moran asks Government to make sure 'voices of Limerick' heard

JACK HORGAN-JONES
Political Correspondent

Alumina "may very well" be included on the next list of sanctioned European Union exports to Russia, a Minister has said.

The Government is under pressure to clarify Aughinish Alumina's role in supplying key raw materials to Russia, with the findings of a Department of Enterprise inquiry due later this month.

Concerns about Aughinish were raised after the publication of an Irish Times investigation in March, which detailed how the plant was exporting vast quantities of raw material to smelters in Russia, which is sold to a company that supplies aluminium to Russian arms manufacturers.

Minister for Higher and Further Education James Lawless yesterday said the Coalition was taking the matter "extremely seriously". He said Ireland had provided "stalwart support" to Ukraine since Russia's invasion in 2022.

"There have been 20 packages of sanctions imposed by the European Union on Russian-linked goods," he told RTE's The Week in Politics, adding that alumina had not featured in any of those.

"Now, it may very well in the next round, but it's not a military product, it's not a dual-use product, it's an industrial product that is used among other things in medical devices, electronics [and] industrial smelters."

Lawless noted that the EU uses 40 per cent of the alumina produced by the Co Limerick plant, adding: "We don't want to cut off our nose to spite our face."

The Limerick plant is owned by Russian metals giant Rusal, which Swedish tax authorities recently concluded remains under the control of sanctioned oligarch Oleg Deripaska.

EU governments are negotiating the bloc's next round of sanctions, which need to be unanimously approved, with another batch of measures to be proposed afterwards, likely during Ireland's presidency of

the Council of the European Union.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Helen McEntee has said securing further sanctions against Russia is a "major foreign policy priority" for Ireland's six-month presidency.

Speaking ahead of a meeting of foreign ministers in Brussels today, McEntee said it was "essential that we maintain our support for Ukraine and keep pressure on Russia".

"I have been clear in saying that further sanctions against Russia are a major foreign policy priority for the Irish presidency."

The European Parliament last week voted in favour of a non-binding motion to ban alumina exports to Russia. Such a step would seriously hit Aughinish's business.

Estonia pushing

A ban on alumina exports to Russia has been pushed for behind the scenes by the Estonian government, with an expectation that the European Commission will re-examine the possibility of proposing sanctions targeting that trade after the Department of Enterprise's inquiry is published.

Limerick mayor John Moran has written to the Government calling for a "co-ordinated forum" to be established in his office to plan the future of Aughinish, which is located outside the city on the Shannon estuary. He yesterday said he had not yet received a response to his letter.

Moran told RTE Radio's This Week programme that Ireland should not be "pushed" into a decision on the future of the plant by the EU. He said people in Limerick were not confident that the voice of Aughinish workers, or its suppliers, are being heard.

"That's the hard part, making sure that part of the equation is heard and we're not just, like, pushed into some decision by the European Union," he said.

Moran said the 2008 bank guarantee was the last time a "big decision" was taken under "European pressure without the right facts", adding that later "we regretted it".



Kerry roll on Dubs floored in semi-final at Croke Park

Kerry's David Clifford wheels away after scoring his side's first goal in their All-Ireland senior football semi-final victory against Dublin yesterday. Dublin were made to rue a decision by the officials that a palmed effort by Ross McGarry did not cross the line.

Reports and analysis: Sports
Monday
Photograph: James Crombie/
Inpho

Hormuz strait closed as US and Iran exchange fire

STEVE HOLLAND
PARISA HAFEZI,
PHIL STEWART
and YOMNA EHAB

US and Iranian forces have exchanged heavy missile and drone assaults, with Tehran targeting US facilities in states across the Gulf yesterday and saying it had again closed the vital Strait of Hormuz.

The strikes were the latest in a cycle of attacks and counter-attacks as Iran seeks to assert control over shipping through the strait. However,

the barrage marked an escalation in pace and range.

The strikes extended to Qatar, a mediator in ceasefire talks that had not come under attack since April, while the United Arab Emirates, which had not been targeted since early May, said its air defences had engaged missiles and drones from Iran.

Iranian media said there had been missile attacks and explosions around the port of Bandar Abbas, home to military facilities on the strait, and nearby Qeshm Island, yesterday after-

noon, as the US reportedly launched another round of attacks.

Interim deal

The renewed violence casts further doubt on the future of an interim US-Iranian agreement signed last month that aimed to reopen the strait and end the war after a further 60 days of negotiations.

In the past week, US president Donald Trump has said he considers the ceasefire over, while leaving the door open to more talks.

The war that began with US and Israeli strikes against Iran on February 28th has destabilised the Gulf, while Iran's effective blockade of the strait has driven energy prices higher, fuelling global inflation.

Higher prices, especially for gasoline, are politically sensitive for Trump in advance of November's US congressional elections.

Iran has sought to establish a permanent system for collecting fees in the strait, which carried one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas ship-

ments before the war, and has warned vessels not to sail without its authorisation.

It said late on Saturday it had closed the waterway after firing a warning shot that struck a vessel travelling on an unauthorised route. Yesterday, it said it had disabled a second vessel.

India said one of its nationals was missing after an attack on the container ship GFS Galaxy off the coast of Oman. Oman said 23 crew members had been rescued. Qatar advised all vessels, including leisure boats, fishing boats and jet

skis, to suspend activities.

Iran's recently created Persian Gulf Strait Authority said that passage through the strait was not possible due to "recent illegal movements of the United States military forces in the region". Permits would be issued "as soon as stability and calm are restored", it said.

US Central Command, however, said Iran did not control the strait and that "traffic is flowing". - Reuters

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Imma warns it won't be able to fund its pensions this year

JACK HORGAN-JONES
Political Correspondent

The Irish Museum of Modern Art (Imma) will not have money to pay its pensioners at some point this year, its chair has warned, after the Government gave it €275,000 less than it sought to fund payments in the last budget.

Imma chairwoman Ali Curran wrote to Minister for Culture Patrick O'Donovan in January to say the museum needed €321,000, based on the retirements it expected to occur, to fund pension payments for the year. It had requested this amount as part of last year's budget process, but was granted just €45,000.

"Imma does not have available resources to support Imma's pension obligations beyond the allocation of €45,000, nor has Imma reserves of

funding from previous years," Curran wrote in the letter, released under the Freedom of Information Act.

She went on to warn that "at some point in 2026 Imma will find itself unable to pay its pensioners due to an absolute lack of resources". The letter said the timing of that would depend on decisions to retire taken by individual employees.

Matter of urgency

The museum first forecast this funding requirement in 2019, Curran wrote, adding that "the matter has been brought to the attention of the department on, at least, a biannual basis since 2021". The board requested that the "matter be addressed and funding secured as a matter of urgency".

An Imma spokesman said there has not yet been an additional allocation of funds to

cover pension costs for this year, but that full funding had been provided last year.

"Imma remains in close dialogue with the department and is hopeful that the full financing requirement will be secured before the end of the year," he said.

The museum said that the situation was not resolved and that a long-term solution would see all pension payments funded through its annual grant from the Oireachtas.

A Department of Culture spokesman said it continues to engage with Imma to address the matter.

The letter was written shortly after Imma co-signed correspondence to Minister for Public Expenditure Jack Chambers, along with the National Library of Ireland and the National Museum of Ireland, flagging similar issues.



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Crime: Gardai have conceded they face a challenge in locating the prime suspect in the murder of Jamey Carney. Page 3

Politics: Violent pornography would be effectively banned under a new law that will be considered by the Government. Page 3

World News



United States: US senator Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican and stalwart ally of president Donald Trump, has died at the age of 71. Page 6

Business Today

Tech: US software group PTC cut its Irish tax bill by 77 per cent to €132,000 as it recorded a 900-fold increase in pretax profits. Page 12

Pensions: The Irish Association of Pension Funds is seeking support for the creation of an Irish-focused investment fund. Page 12

Sports Monday

Tennis: Italian Jannik Sinner overcame Alexander Zverev in the Wimbledon men's singles final.

Soccer: Fifa will look at the possibility of expanding the World Cup by another 16 teams before the 2030 event, according to its president Gianni Infantino.