

## New website collates data on civil society organisations

A new website called Benefacts has just been published. Its tagline is "Data for Social Good". In the main, it is a database of information regarding "civil society organisations in Ireland. Besides charities, this includes philanthropies, sports bodies, political, human rights and advocacy organisations, business and trade associations". It is a database of 20,000 organisations.

Benefacts collects and organises information, data and figures on these organisations from public sources and collates and publishes them in one central place. Their aim is to show the scale and profile of the sector. The website is free, and they encourage others to use the data available, under an Open-Data re-use principle. Their work includes both harvesting digital information, which can be collated and organised easily, to physically inputting documents into the database. Their website states that they "believe the value of the data justifies this effort".

Benefacts are an independent, non-governmental organisation that are unaligned, and "do not represent any sectoral interest and ... have no regulatory powers or responsibilities". Information can be accessed through the summary data or as an application programme interface (API).

They respond on a case-by-case basis to requests for further information.

Labour Leader Brendan Howlin TD has commended the work, saying that the publication of this data "will allow for a much greater interrogation of this important policy area and is consistent with the move towards the proactive publication of state data" we have seen in the past few years.

## Cyclists not paying fixed fines

Fixed fines for cycling offences were introduced last July. Since then 701 cyclists have been served fines for breaking road rules. Under this system, a set fine of €40 is served to the cyclist, whose name and address are taken by a member of the Gardaí on site. Letters including the fine are then sent to the address stated, to be paid in 26 days. If not paid by then, the fine increases to €60 and must be paid within 56 days. Continued failure to pay could end the cyclist in court, facing a €2,000 fine.

However, the Garda Press office has confirmed that only 322 (45%) have been paid fines served over the last eleven months.

The Department of Justice figures reveal that fines were issued for the following reasons:

- Over half of fines issued were given to cyclists who ran red lights;
- 153 cyclists were fined for not having front or rear lights;
- 86 cyclists were fined for "cycling without reasonable consideration to other users"; and
- 51 were fined for cycling in a pedestrianised area.

Many advocates say that proper cycling etiquette and education is the solution, not fines. The Road Safety Authority aim to roll out a cycle training standard in September. It will be known as Cycle Right and will be delivered to primary school children.

## Ireland moves towards apartment living

The housing market is shifting in favour of apartments over houses, according to the Sunday Business Post. Dublin property consultant Owen Reilly told the SBP that apartments are selling much faster than houses, even in usually sought-after places such as Rathmines.

In DNG's Q1 2016 report, it was stated that there was a 1.3% price increase for apartments in Dublin. Year on year, the increase is 2.3% on average. Apartments in the city centre and in west Dublin have seen the biggest boost in prices (3.9% and 2.5% respectively).

The buyer profile of apartments is also changing. A large number of first-time buyers are opting for apartments. Investors are interested in city centre apartments with high price-points (roughly €400,000 or higher) according to Mr Reilly. An older demographic is also moving into the apartment market, as they downsize on their homes or prepare for their retirement.

Non-Irish Nationals are also now making up one quarter of apartment buyers, something the SBP report attributes to their being accustomed to living in apartments.

Reilly commented on the trend, "The old attitude of buying a starter home and waiting for the value to increase so you can trade up to the next home . . . I'm not sure that people believe that anymore."

In addition to the change in demographic, and attitude, the fact remains that supply of apartments is low, at odds with the amount of buyers.

## President Higgins calls for action over words

President Michael D Higgins attended the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey this morning, organised by the outgoing UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to address a number of challenges around the globe including gender inequality and climate change, and the humanitarian crisis happening across Europe.

The President addressed the morning's crowd. He said that Europe was facing a "moment of truth". A strategy to deal with the crisis was presented by Mr Ban at the conference, and a long-term plan for dealing with the situation in a sustainable way, going forward. The strategy received the backing of President Higgins in his address.

He wants a move away from "talking about the problem" to actually fighting the issues.

He said, "It requires a profound and integrated rethink of international politics, and of our theory and practice of economics, development and trade".

He went on to comment:

"We must be aware of all those women, men and children who yearn for, even weep for, a United Nations that would be supported, resourced and enabled, beyond any competing set of narrow interests, to act decisively against the interrelated issues of global poverty and hunger, conflict, displacement and climate change."

## This week at Public Affairs Ireland

### On the Blog

#### New Union merger talks given the go-ahead

Shauna Nimmo

Read [here](#)

#### The Programme for Government 2016: A Summary

Shauna Nimmo

Read [here](#)

#### Transatlantic Trade Talks face mounting criticisms

Tom Ferris

Read [here](#)

#### Independents and the Fence

Laura Mannion

Read [here](#)

#### IMF says “Too slow for too long”

Tom Ferris

Read [here](#)

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Your in-house training is completely tailored to your particular needs, from start to finish. Our dedicated In-House Executive Muireann is available to help you build the course your team wants and needs.

# This week in Dáil Éireann

## Tuesday 24 May

2.30 p.m.  
Questions (Taoiseach)

3.15 p.m.  
Questions (Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government)

4.15 p.m.  
Leaders Questions

4.36 p.m.  
Order of Business

Motion re Dáil Reform

Statements re Mental Health Services (Resumed to conclude)

7.00 p.m.  
Private Members Business

8.30 p.m.  
Adjournments

9.10 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns

## Thursday 26 May

10.30 a.m.  
Order of Business

Statements on Report of the O'Higgins Commission of Inquiry (Resumed)

3.30 p.m.  
Questions (Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade)

4.45 p.m.  
Adjournments

5.25 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns

## Wednesday 25 May

10.30 a.m.  
Leaders Questions

10.51 a.m.  
Questions (Taoiseach)

11.36 a.m.  
Order of Business

Motion re Dáil Reform

Motion re Dublin and Monaghan Bombings (to conclude within 2 hours)

Statements on Report of the O'Higgins Commission of Inquiry Resumed

1.30 p.m.  
SOS (1 hour)

2.30 p.m.  
Questions (Minister for Social Protection)

3.45 p.m.  
Morning business continued

7.00 p.m.  
Private Members Business

8.30 p.m.  
Adjournments

9.10 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns

Adjourned Sine Die

# This week's Committee Meetings

## Tuesday 24 May

Housing and Homelessness (Committee)  
CR3, LH 2000 10.30 a.m. (T)  
AGENDA: (i) Session A: 10.30 a.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from Threshold]  
(ii) Session B: 11.30 a.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Officials from the Department of Social Protection]  
(iii) Session C: 2.00 p.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from the Irish Property Owners Association]  
(iv) Session D: 3.00 p.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from the Housing Finance Agency]

Dáil Reform (Sub)  
Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 5 p.m.  
AGENDA: Private Meeting

## Wednesday 25 May

No Committee Meetings scheduled.

## Thursday 26 May

Housing and Homelessness (Committee)  
CR3, LH 2000 10.30 a.m. (T)  
AGENDA: (i) Session A: 10.30 a.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from Social Justice Ireland]  
(ii) Session B: 11.30 a.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from Peter McVerry Trust]  
(iii) Session C: 2.00 p.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from Focus Ireland]  
(iv) Session D: 3.00 p.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from Simon Communities of Ireland]  
(v) Session E: 4.00 p.m.  
Housing and Homelessness (resumed) [Representatives from Novas Initiatives]