



Strong sales: Christmas shoppers on Henry Street at the weekend. PHOTO: FERGAL PHILLIPS

Friday to New Year's Eve accounts for over 35pc of trade for Dublin retailers – making it a critical business period. Mr Guiney said traders expect people to favour in-store shopping over online spending. “We did some interesting consumer research in August

with Red C and it indicated that people are planning to spend less online compared to the pandemic period and much more in-store,” he added. “That should be good for bricks-and-mortar stores. So we would be very hopeful for the Christmas shopping season in Dublin this year.”

off benefit for Waterford city spending. Waterford Chamber of Commerce chief executive Michael Garland said Winterval has had an enormous impact on boosting local trade. Limerick is also reporting strong trade with the city centre car parks busier than at any time since 2018/2019.

The shopper boom came after Limerick City and County Council issued a special appeal for traders to support its city-centre Christmas markets – aimed at persuading shoppers from across Munster to opt for the Treaty City for their festive purchases. Limerick Chamber of Commerce chief executive

Maria Kelly said that while the overall number of shoppers appeared to be up on previous years, indications are that some are spending less. “Christmas simply has to be good for traders,” she said, stressing that many are reliant on festive earnings to sustain them until March or April. Dublin Town chief executive Richard Guiney said there was

a noticeable drop in consumer spending and shopper footfall over September and October – with the belief that people were saving money for the Christmas shopping season. “Certainly all the feedback we are getting is that it is going to be a bumper Christmas,” he said. The six weeks from Black

as bogus taxi drivers nets raids on passenger phones

source said. It is a source of huge concern to financial institutions as well as gardaí, who have been working together to tackle the issue. “This is a very elaborate scam which starts with members of the gang picking a target – usually a male – on a night out in a busy pub or club,” a source said. “The criminals then follow their target for the night and shoulder surf them to try and get their phone's passcode as they use it on the night.” Shoulder surfing is using direct observation techniques,

such as looking over someone's shoulder, to get information such as a passcode or pin. “As soon as they see the phone passcode, the criminals will set about stealing the phone, and what has happened in many of the cases being investigated by gardaí is that they call up an accomplice in a bogus taxi. “The ‘taxi’, which looks legitimate, will have been parked near the location where the victim has been targeted and is now constantly under the surveillance of the criminals. “The taxi will arrive to attempt to pick up the victim and offer to bring them home. Investigations have established that the criminals are very CCTV aware in relation to their movements in the bogus taxis. “The mobile phone is stolen while the victim is in the taxi.

Different approaches have been used, including violence and distraction techniques in some cases so that the criminals can obtain the device. “Once the criminals have the phone and the phone's passcode, in devices in which facial recognition is a feature, they reset the face ID to themselves. “The apps on the phone use the phone's face ID so that enables the gang to get them into bank apps. “Some bank apps require the app passcode if the face ID has been changed. “But most people have the same passcode for their phone and their banking apps. “On average, gardaí have been investigating cases where between €3,000 to €4,000 has been stolen from each victim's account. “The money is then normally

transferred to a money mule account, and cleared out of that immediately. “In some cases the criminals have even transferred the stolen money to another victim's bank account, which makes it more difficult to trace.” The investigation into the gang has been ongoing for a number of months and more arrests are expected. The gang has also used Google Maps in an attempt to fleece victims. One of the victims of the gang recently spoke out on RTE Radio 1's *Liveline* show. He stated that his phone was stolen and €1,300 was taken from his bank account. “It was an absolute nightmare,” he said. “Up to about €1,300 was gone. This is an experienced scam.”

 comhairle chontae na mí meath county council

NOTICE OF APPLICATION TO AN BORD PLEANÁLA FOR APPROVAL PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT THE FORMER SPICER'S BAKERY, RAMPARTS CAR PARK AND ANDY BRENNAN PARK, ATHLUMNEY, NAVAN, COUNTY MEATH

Pursuant to Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2022 and the requirements of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2022, notice is hereby given that Meath County Council intends to make an application for approval to An Bord Pleanála to carry out development at the former Spicer's Bakery (Registered Protected Structure), the ramparts car park and Andy Brennan Park in the townland of Athlumney, Navan, Co Meath. The application site includes a protected structure no. 90881 The Former Spicer's Bakery.

- The proposed development comprises of the following:**
1. The preservation and conservation of the former Spicer's Bakery (PS) and the demolition of associated outbuildings and sheds.
 2. The renovation and extension of the former Spicer's Bakery 2 Storey Office Building as a café with an associated public realm area inclusive of bandstand.
 3. The reconfiguration of the Ramparts Carpark with new access and egress points, cycle parking, public realm area and footpaths.
 4. The demolition of 4 no. terraced derelict properties along the Athlumney Road and replacement with a stepped public plaza area at the entrance to Andy Brennan Park.
 5. The redevelopment of the Andy Brennan Park for active recreational use including the refurbishment of the existing fishing platform.
 6. Associated landscaping, associated pedestrian linkages including 2 no. pedestrian crossings; site drainage works; and all associated site development works.

A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of the proposed development.
An Bord Pleanála may approve the proposed development in whole or in part, with or without specified modifications, or it may refuse to approve the proposed development.

The Natura Impact Statement together with all Plans and Particulars of the proposed development will be available for inspection free of charge or may be purchased on payment of a small fee (which fee shall not exceed the reasonable cost of making such a copy) during public opening hours within the period **22 December 2022 and 13 February 2023**, inclusive, at the following locations:

- An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
- Meath County Council, Buvinda House, Dublin Road, Navan, Co Meath
- Online at: <https://www.meath.ie/council/council-services/planning-and-building>

- Submissions and observations are invited relating to:**
- The implications of the proposed development for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned,
 - The likely effects on the environment of the proposed development, and
 - The likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European site, if carried out.

Submissions or observations can only be made in writing to An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, not later than 5.30pm on 13 February 2023.

All submissions must be labelled with the following project name: **Meath County Council Spicer's Bakery/Andy Brennan Project, Athlumney, Navan, Co Meath.**

A person may question the validity of a decision by An Bord Pleanála by way of an application for judicial review, under Order 84 of the rules of the Superior Courts (S.I. No.15 of 1986) in accordance with Section 50 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2022. Practical information in respect of the judicial review process can be accessed on www.pleanala.ie or www.citizensinformation.ie.

Martin Murray,
Director of Services, Meath County Council.
19 December 2022.

www.meath.ie 

Brian Cowen says 'half-drunk on the radio' claim was muck-throwing

John Downing

Former Taoiseach Brian Cowen says personalised accusations of committing "economic treason" – and being "halfway between drunk and hungover" on radio – were simply muck-throwing.

In a rare interview with veteran RTE broadcaster Seán O'Rourke, Mr Cowen said he had no choice but to put up with the accusations made in 2010 at the low-point in economic recession. Fine Gael's Simon Coveney accused Mr Cowen of sounding drunk on a radio interview in September 2010 when Fianna Fáil TDs and senators were in Galway for a pre-Dáil think-in.

Some weeks later, Labour leader Eamon Gilmore used a Dáil debate to accuse the then-Taoiseach of "economic treason" over his inclusion of Anglo Irish Bank in the controversial state bank guarantee scheme just days earlier. Mr Cowen said these and other charges against his integrity were completely unacceptable. "They were out of order in fairness. Neither charge had



Cowen spoke to veteran RTE broadcaster Sean O'Rourke

any merit. It was part of a 'throw enough muck at the wall and some of it will stick' approach. That seemed to be the only logic for a lot of it," Mr Cowen recalled.

"And sometimes you have to listen to that when you're in highly-charged political territory. It's unfortunate – but that's the way it is," he added.

Mr Cowen is recovering from serious ill health after he suffered a stroke in July 2019. This rare interview is part of a television and online series called 'Tribes', looking at the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael parties, which dominated Irish politics opposing one another

for a century, but now share government. Mr Cowen, who is now 62, said he was pleased the Fine Gael-Labour coalition, which followed a rout of Fianna Fáil in an election in February 2011, continued the draconian economic policies required to fix the shattered Irish economy. But he did not believe they would have had the courage to initiate these unavoidable measures and were grateful that the Fianna Fáil-led government front-loaded three years of austerity.

The former Taoiseach, who also served as finance minister for the years 2004-2008, defended high public spending funded on unreliable construction tax revenues. He said there was a deal of hindsight at play in these and other judgements of his stewardship and argued that social initiative like improving pensions and the health services were his priority.

"These are things that have to be done now – that the problem is now. You can't put them back for five years," he said.

Mr Cowen insists every decision he took was aiming to advance Ireland's best interests. He said that nobody had



Rare interview: Former taoiseach Brian Cowen, pictured in August, is recovering after suffering a stroke in 2019. PHOTO: MARK CONDREN

foreseen the impending crash and recession which hit in summer 2008 just as he took over as Taoiseach from Bertie Ahern.

The interview goes back to his family roots in Fianna Fáil, his relationship with Albert Reynolds, who gave him his first government job, and relations with Bertie Ahern and the late former finance minister, Brian Lenihan. He reflects on experiences in coalition with the Progressive Democrats and Labour.

Mr Cowen stood asides as

Taoiseach and Fianna Fáil leader in January 2010 and left politics entirely. He said he knew his party would suffer heavy losses in the Febru-

'I was very upset about it but that was the people's decision'

ary 2011 election but he never expected them to drop from 77 TDs in the previous election to just 20.

"I was very upset about it personally. But that was the people's decision and we stand or fall by their judgement," he said.

The former Laois-Offaly TD said the party is now rebuilding public trust and has once again led government.

He rejected outright the prospect of a merger with Fine Gael and suggested any future prospect of coalition with Sinn Féin would be for Fianna Fáil TDs and Senators to decide in future and on the merits of the case at the time.



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ROADS ACT 1993

ROAD REGULATIONS 1994

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF LOCAL ROAD L-7413,
DONAGHPATRICK BRIDGE, DONAGHPATRICK,
COUNTY MEATH

Meath County Council has made an order to close the L-7413 at the townland of Donaghpatrik.

This closure is required to facilitate remedial works to Donaghpatrik Bridge.

The closure will commence at 9.30am on Monday, 9 January 2023 and continue to 4.30pm on Friday, 27 January 2023.

Alternative Routes

Northbound on the L-7413

Travel south on the L-7413 to its junction with the R147. At the junction turn right and continue to its junction with the L-6832. At the junction, turn right and continue to its junction with the L-3409. At the junction turn right and continue to its junction with the L-7413. Turn right and continue up to the northside of the bridge.

Southbound on the L-7413

Travel north on the L-7413 to its junction with the L-3409. At the junction, turn left and continue to its junction with the L-6832. At the junction, turn left and continue to its junction with the R147. At the junction, turn left and continue to its junction with the L-7413. At the junction, turn left continue up to the southside of the bridge.

Diversion signs will be in place. Local Access will be facilitated up to the bridge.

www.meath.ie

Ahern hopeful protocol issues will be sorted soon

Michelle Devane

FORMER taoiseach Bertie Ahern has spoken of his belief that issues over the Northern Ireland Protocol can be resolved ahead of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

Mr Ahern said he was hopeful the anniversary of the agreement, in April, could be celebrated with a deal on the outstanding protocol issues.

Talks between the EU and UK to resolve the impasse over the contentious Brexit trading arrangements are continuing.

"The technical issues on the protocol, I believe, can be sorted out," Mr Ahern told BBC One's *Sunday Politics Northern Ireland* programme.

"I do understand that unionists and loyalists have concerns about the constitutional position. We have to take account of their views and try and find solutions to alleviate the concerns and fears."

Mr Ahern said "a lot of progress" had been made on the protocol issues.

"Hopefully over the early weeks of next year that can be dealt with," he added. "The concern about the constitutional issues... we have to work through with loyalists and unionists."

"So I'm hopeful that, when we get to April, we will be able to genuinely celebrate it."

Devolved government at Stormont has been in flux since February when the DUP withdrew its first minister from the ministerial executive in protest at Brexit's Northern Ireland Protocol.

The DUP insists it will not allow a return to power-sharing until radical changes to the protocol are delivered.

It has blocked the formation of a new administration following May's Assembly election and prevented the Assembly meeting to conduct legislative business.



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ROADS ACT 1993

ROAD REGULATIONS 1994

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF LOCAL ROAD L-62033 AT
KILTALE CULVERT, KILTALE, COUNTY MEATH

Meath County Council has made an order to close the L-62033 at the townland of Kiltale.

This closure is required to facilitate remedial works to Kiltale Culvert.

The closure will commence at 9.30am on Monday, 9 January 2023 and continue to 4.30pm on Tuesday, 24 January 2023.

Alternative Routes

Northbound on the L62033

Travel south on the L-62033 to its junction with the R154. At the junction turn right and continue to its junction with the L-62023. At the junction, turn right and continue to its junction with the L-62031. At the junction turn right and continue to its junction with the L-62033. Turn right and continue up to the northside of the culvert.

Southbound on the L62033

Travel north on the L-62033 to its junction with the L-62031. At the junction, turn left and continue to its junction with the L-62023. At the junction, turn left and continue to its junction with the R154. At the junction, turn left and continue to its junction with the L-62033. At the junction, turn left continue up to the southside of the culvert.

Diversion signs will be in place. Local Access will be facilitated up to the culvert.

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