



# Does anyone care about our elderly citizens?

Dear Editor,

I READ with interest the excellent letters in *The Echo* edition of July 9. A common theme in all these letters seems to be emerging in these and previous correspondence. It's one of sheer frustration and anger at the way people in Tallaght are treated by those in authority. One of the issues raised in those letters is the ongoing 'works' on the Main Road which to date have been an unmitigated disaster and do not reflect well on those who are responsible.

These works started in March and were due to be completed (as far as the Spawell) by December. At this stage most people are aware of the non-progress and the devastating effect that this project has had on businesses in Tallaght village and the impact on the residents on the Main Road, many of whom are elderly and who have contributed greatly to the community of Tallaght over many years.

Now in the autumn of their lives they have suffered 10 years of inappropriate development that has effectively destroyed a once beautiful village and made them feel trapped in their homes.

During these recent works my own parents at age 86 have had to endure at least 6 days in which they could not leave their home. In some cases they got notification of upcoming works but on a

number of occasions they got no notification. Hospital appointments have had to be cancelled, visitors to their house have had to be put off, apart from the stress of not being able to get out of the house which in my parents' situation has knock-on effects. I have no doubt this was the case with many of the residents on this road.

Is this the way to treat elderly people? Do any of the people in charge of the project really care?

Would this be allowed to happen in Foxrock village or Rathfarnham village. I know this has been thrown out before but the reality is that if a problem started it would certainly not be allowed to develop in these areas the way it has in Tallaght.

It was clear within a couple of weeks that there was something seriously wrong in the progress of the proposed works, but yet it took three months before the contractors took any remedial action. As can be evidenced it is still an insufficient response as works progress at a snail's pace.

Why do they need to dig up the whole village and Main Road, but yet only actually then work on one small area. It's as if they sought to maximise the disruption to businesses and residents. South Dublin County Council, whom I have contacted, has absolved itself of blame as the project is farmed out to a contractor and the supervision of the

works to a design company. All very well, but these people know nothing of Tallaght and really have no interest in the concerns of its residents and so will do the job without any consideration and take as long as it takes and move on to the next job.

I don't normally write letters, as unfortunately the people who need to read them most likely won't, but having read some excellent letters in recent weeks I realised that we all have a duty to highlight the wrongs that are going on in our community.

Liz Kennedy in her letter last week commented on the good that is happening in Tallaght and the healthy level of volunteerism that exists here and she is correct to highlight this. However I fear that the way the authorities have for decades ignored the concerns of residents and refused to engage in a meaningful way with these volunteers who are best positioned to know what is right for their community, will lead to a level of frustration that will discourage Tallaght residents from joining community groups.

That will be a sad day for Tallaght and will have major repercussions as an embattled community tries to deal with the many issues created by bad planning and lack of consultation.

Yours sincerely,  
Enda O'Toole, Tallaght

# Thank you to *The Echo* for giving us a voice

Dear Editor,

I WOULD just like to thank Maurice Garvey and *The Echo* for the coverage given to us in *The Echo* in the past couple of weeks.

I would also like to say thanks for all the years you covered stories for me and especially for listening to the ordinary people and giving us a voice.

Sorry I could not send this sooner, but I was run off my feet since last week. I will keep you informed of any news. Thanks to all your staff.

Yours sincerely,  
Kathleen Ryan, Asst. Secretary, St Mark's Residents' Association

# Racism does not have a place in our society

Dear Editor,

SOME WEEKS ago you reported on a racist and physical attack on one of our communities most energetic community workers, Mr Alpha Gassama. I do hope at this stage that Mr Gassama has fully recovered and that maybe the perpetrators will be brought to justice, although I won't hold my breath.

Racism is very much alive in the Clondalkin area – I am well aware of the constant racist abuse, be it spitting, foul and disgusting language, and physical attacks, which go unreported. I am aware that even in our voluntary sector that racism is seen and even tolerated by members of our community – in one instance a person whom I know for years was called a “Guinea pig”.

Is it possible that our local council could take a more pro-active role in combatting this disgusting behaviour.

Yours sincerely,  
Paul Doran,  
Clondalkin

# Time to change the law for persons with disabilities

Dear Editor,

WE VOTED overwhelmingly recently for a 'yes' Vote for Equality for LGBT in the Civil Marriage Referendum, but we still have much inequality in our great country. People with a disability are among the most disadvantaged and marginalised citizens in our country.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international agreement directed at changing attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities.

Ireland was one of the first EU

member states to sign the Convention when it was opened for signature on March 30, 2007.

However, almost eight years have passed and persons with disabilities and their families are still waiting for Ireland to make the CRPD a part of Irish law. A big barrier to Ireland ratifying the CRPD is the Lunacy Regulation (Ireland) Act 1871.

The Lunacy Regulation (Ireland) Act 1871 refers to people in such awful terms as 'idiot', 'lunatic' and 'unsound mind' and there are currently over two-and-a-half thousand people in Ireland who are Wards

of Court on account of age, intellectual disability, mental illness or brain injury.

The current Government made assurances in the 2011 Programme for Government that there would be movement in this area. However, we now face a race against time to enact the 2013 Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill before the General Election in 2016.

As we approach the eighth anniversary of Ireland signing the CRPD, we need to repeal the Lunacy Regulation (Ireland) Act 1871 and introduce the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill.

We need to change the law now. People with disabilities have been waiting 144 years for equality – their time has come. It is vital as we approach the centenary of 1916 that all our children are treated equally.

A nationwide discussion is needed on how we treat people with a disability. A system of direct payments must be introduced so every person has an individual choice over their own lives.

Go raibh maith agat,  
Cllr Francis Timmons,  
Clondalkin Area Chair

# Pension payments, politicians and public expenditure

Dear Editor,

A DETAILED analysis of payments made by the Oireachtas and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform by the RTÉ Investigations Unit shows that over €65 million was disbursed in pensions to ex-politicians in the four years since the general election – equivalent to an average of €1.37 million payable each month.

The largest pension was paid to former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, who received €726,419 between March 2011 and year end 2014.

This includes his annual TD pension, paid by the Oireachtas, his Ministerial pension, paid by

the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, a lump sum and termination payments, made in 2011.

In 2014 Mr Ahern was paid a ministerial pension of €81,140, and an additional €53,291 from Leinster House, totalling €134,431. In 2011, he received a 'termination lump sum' of €16,404 followed by a 'lump sum' of €159,873.

Next on the list is Brian Cowen whose payments mirror those of Mr Ahern being paid €726,367. His combined Oireachtas and ministerial pension is worth €134,379 annually.

Third on the list is former Tánaiste Mary Harney, who was paid €647,406. Her annual pension stands at €116,987,

€13,000 lower than she claimed in 2012.

The fourth highest payment goes to ex-Minister Michael Woods, in receipt of €632,967 between March 2011 and December 2014.

Senior politicians in successive Fianna Fáil governments received cumulative payments of €600,000, including Dermot Ahern, Mary O'Rourke, Rory O'Hanlon and Kerry South TD John O'Donoghue. Some politicians choose not to accept certain payments, as collated by RTÉ Investigations Unit.

Yours sincerely,  
Liam Kinsella,  
Redwood Rise, Dublin 24

# Pat Rabbitte, TD: “Let's see what the future brings”

Dear Editor,

AS PAT RABBITTE announced he will not contest the next election, the political stalwart told UTV Ireland Live: “I contested my first General Election in November 1982 and I think that was 33 years ago, so I feel I have done my stint.”

“The people of Dublin South West have been very loyal and have elected me at six consecutive General Elections and I have done my best to represent them.”

“I have given it whatever I had. I will be 67 when the next Dáil convenes and do I want to be in Dáil Éireann in my 70s? I think the answer honestly is I have decided I don't.”

Asked if he despised Tánaiste Joan Burton he said: “There are always personality tensions in politics. There is nothing unusual about that.”

“I am the one who promoted Joan Burton. I am the one when I was party leader that made her the first woman spokesperson on finance. I appointed her to the public accounts committee. I have supported her over the last 12 months and I will continue to do so until the general election.”

The Tánaiste said: “I know that amidst a lengthy political career, one of his proudest achievements was his involvement in the first national drugs strategy during the rainbow government, in an effort to address the drugs scourge in Dublin.”

The news is a hammer blow to Labour which already lost Eamon Gilmore and Ruairi Quinn. Rabbitte was one of few TDs guaranteed re-election. With them they take a wealth of experience going into what will be a crucial election for Labour.

Speculation abounds that he will take up broadcasting. When pressed on the issue he said: “The only future that I have planned at the moment is that I will continue to work for the people of Dublin South West until the next election, but, we'll see what the future brings.”

Yours sincerely,

Gerry Coughlan,  
Parkhill West, Dublin 24



# letters

Letters should be no more than 250 words to remain unedited

The Echo Newspaper, Enterprise Centre, Main Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24

tel: 4685350 email: letters@echo.ie

Dear Editor,  
RECENTLY I had an interesting discussion with a Tallaght business person. He has lived in Tallaght all his life, as did his parents for most of theirs. As a family they have contributed many years of voluntary service to the community. In conversation he told me a while back his work transferred him to a provincial town for a period. During his time there he was very impressed with how well the place was run and developed.

Speaking to a friend one day he commented how lucky they seem to be to have a good County Manager. The friend responded by saying that he knew the manager, that he lived in the area, socialised there, was involved in the local sports clubs, his children went to local schools, his neighbours were his friends, and there was no way he would get away with building an environment that was anti-community. He was also responsible for the building of social housing. The key message that came out of the conversation was the fact that the Co. Manager lived in the community. His attitude was it was his home and area, and was determined to build a pro-community environment.

Reading the editorial in last week's *Echo* it encouraged "every citizen to play their part in shaping what they want from their community" in the new Draft Development Plan. Yes, very laudable and commonsense advice. However, you can have all the draft plans you like, contribute all you like providing you are listened to with respect.

I am a resident for over fifty years in Tallaght. During that time it is a "graveyard" littered with Development Plans, Master Plans, other plans, "engaging with the community" and glossy brochures, all of which never materialised. We are all familiar with the pretend consultations that took place. Proof is the Tallaght they created with no community input. *The Echo* further states in its leader "this is a very worthwhile exercise and it is important that people engage with the council to help to ensure the county continues to somewhere where we are all proud of".

No one could argue with these sentiments. But what is the reality? The SDCC does not know how to engage. It imposes decisions. We in Tallaght are



nothing more than "ball boys/girls" for the rest of South County Dublin, the nobodies in the big picture of the SDCC.

More proof – nine of the 10 most deprived communities in South County Dublin are in Tallaght, whereas the 10 most affluent in South County are just three to four miles down the road. Also, at a time when we are encouraged "to play our part in shaping our communities" Tallaght is in a major battle to preserve green spaces under threat of more social housing. None of the most affluent areas are earmarked.

I have in my possession a political brochure profiling a councillor and a possible general election candidate promoting themselves to those living in these affluent areas. Her message "protect the mountainside in this area from inappropriate development" also "to allow residents enjoy mountain views and act as a barrier to further development". Different standards for different places. They have no standards for Tallaght. We have lived with it for years.

Let's cut to the chase. Tallaght is/was discriminated against big time. Massive planning injustices, unfairness, inequality was heaped on our area. As far as Tallaght is concerned the SDCC is a dysfunctional body. It never listened. We were not important enough. It is convenient for those

in the system to dismiss us as "nuisances" "them again" "the usual crowd". Well, let me tell them loud and clear, the "them again" and "the usual crowd" are speaking the truth. It is not fashionable to speak the truth in today's PC society. Here in Tallaght the values of truth, justice, fairness and equality were never on their agenda. We were Tallaght. Developments that they would never get away with elsewhere they put in Tallaght. There is no trust, and the SDCC never did anything to create trust. Our submissions and genuine concerns were ignored.

The SDCC has failed Tallaght. I am now calling for a stand-alone Tallaght County or City Council. It should be located in the current council building. Whilst we have an area committee for Tallaght, I am calling for a totally separate local authority with its own CEO and staff totally dedicated and responsible for Tallaght. We have a population of approx. 90,000, justifying our own council. We are sick and tired of being the "ball boys/girls". A 2016 proclamation would read "Treat all the people of the nation equally, except Tallaght".

Yours sincerely,  
Aidan Thomas,  
Bancroft

## Minister should put the patient at the heart of decisions

Dear Editor,

I READ with increasing dismay the media reports on the clash between Minister Varadkar and the HSE re the raft of patient safety issues within HSE hospitals in recent years. I quote from one national media article on this issue "The HSE was involved in yet another shake-up of top managerial posts last year to improve its delivery".

This is at the heart of all that is wrong – we need less re-organisation at the top and a detailed, organised and substantial frontloading of staff involved in patient care.

To believe that better outcomes can be solely delivered by another layer of management shows the absolute dysfunction that is still at the heart of the HSE. And is deeply depressing!

We see how many of our newly qualified doctors and nurses are emigrating in their droves and many will ask "Why?"

The OECD reported last week that our doctors are amongst the best paid in the OECD region and yet many do not wish to stay and work in Ireland. Could our top-heavy managerial layers vs our skeletal levels of frontline staff not be part of the problem too?

I also read with dread from the substantive articles on this issue that highlighted the internal documents that were sent between the Minister and the HSE. It would seem that from all this correspondence that not one person within many of the hospitals named were designated to ensure that recommendations were enforced and that the national guidelines on the reporting of serious incidents were followed through.

The reason I highlight these issues is it would appear that different rules apply to Voluntary Hospitals and HSE hospitals. Following the HIQA enquiry into Tallaght, the hospital frequently and publicly issues updates on the its implementation plans regarding each and every issue raised in the HIQA report. Voluntary Hospitals, it would appear, provide a different level of accountability than HSE-run hospitals do.

It should be noted by all patients that all HIQA reports have national as well as local hospital recommendations. The Minister and the HSE would do well to oblige all HSE hospitals to publish board minutes online and to oblige them to regularly update the public on the implementation of all the National HIQA recommendations that apply to their hospital as they do in Tallaght.

We in Tallaght Hospital Action Group have lobbied for many years for an independent patients' voice to be established in Ireland. There is a large element of "lip service" paid to listening to, and engaging with patients in our health service. This has been highlighted when many of our patients organisations lost their funding from the HSE. The current situation, however, gives the HSE, the DOHC and indeed the Minister an opportunity to assess how to ensure a truly independent process of engaging with patients in both policy decisions and health service planning.

Engaging patients in health policy decision-making helps to ensure that policies reflect patient and caregiver needs, preferences and capabilities, making it an appropriate and cost-effective way to address the needs of the growing numbers accessing our healthcare system.

This has been recognised as a requirement in the Irish healthcare setting since the publication of the Madden Report on patient safety in 2008.

We have heard much from the Minister on the establishment of a "patient safety unit" but have seen little or no progress. The only advances have been made in the area of patient advocacy, or in other words the "complaints" process.

If the Minister is serious about improving patient safety he should include patients at each and every level of the decision-making process. It is astonishing to think that we have a consumer agency and not a patient agency!

The Minister, I would suggest, needs to take a lead and place the patient at the heart of the process.

Yours sincerely,  
Triona Murphy,  
Chairperson,  
Tallaght Hospital Action Group, Firhouse, Dublin 24

## VOX POP:

IRELAND'S new postcode system, Eircode, launched this week at a cost of €27 million. We asked, do you understand the system and do you think it is worth the money?



**RICHARD WARREN, TALLAGHT**

I don't understand it at all and I don't think the government put enough effort into explaining it. It just sounds like a waste of money.



**JOSIE PURCELL, TALLAGHT**

I don't think they've put any effort into explaining it and I don't understand it. It's just another waste of money from the government.



**LILY HAROLD, TALLAGHT**

It's another waste of money – what's wrong with the system we have in place already? The government needs to be more careful in where they're putting money.



**MICHELLE O'NEILL, SPRINGFIELD**

I don't know anything about it, so they haven't done a good job in explaining it. It's a waste of money – it's another one of these fly-by-night ideas.



**BRIAN ROGAN, MILLBROOK**

It's another quango by the government. I certainly won't be using it – the entire thing is rubbish. There's other things they need to be addressing first.

Send your letter to **The Echo Newspaper, Enterprise Centre, Main Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24** or email **letters@echo.ie**