



Best for sport

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Let's spend the night together: Rolling Stones to play Croke Park

Jennifer O'Brien
Ireland Arts Correspondent

The Rolling Stones will be announced today as the performers for a fourth concert at Croke Park this summer, *The Times* has learnt.

The announcement will end weeks of speculation surrounding the gig after the standalone show on May 17 was

approved by planners. The band's No Filter tour, which began last year with dates throughout Europe, has been extended to include a concert at GAA headquarters. Dates for London, Manchester, Southampton, Edinburgh and Birmingham are also scheduled.

Aiken Promotions will make the official announcement at 8am today. Mick Jagger said that the band viewed

the concerts in Ireland and Britain as "very special". "It's always exhilarating going to cities we haven't played for quite a while and also some new venues," Jagger, 74, said. "This part of the No Filter tour is really special for the Stones. We are looking forward to getting back onstage in the summer."

It was reported this month that a planning application for a fourth con-

cert at Croke Park this summer had been lodged. Already scheduled are Michael Bublé on July 7 and Taylor Swift on June 15 and 16.

Support acts for the Stones will be announced soon and tickets for the concert will go on sale on March 23.

Irish fans were speculating about the possibility of a Croke Park date last week when several posters featuring

the band's tongue and lips logo appeared throughout Dublin under the tagline "No Stopping".

Keith Richards, 74, said that far from suggesting retirement, the new tour dates mark a new beginning for the group. "It's such a joy to play with this band. There's no stopping us, we're only just getting started really," he said.

Going for Croke, page 3

Make 2040 ads look like real news, papers told

Regional media 'could not say no' to revenue

Ellen Coyne Senior Ireland Reporter

Regional newspapers were instructed to make government advertorials look like independent stories and in some cases part of "the normal news cycle," *The Times* can reveal.

Editors at several local titles raised concerns after they were instructed not to clearly mark as a commercial feature sponsored content about Ireland 2040, the national development plan.

A similar campaign for Creative Ireland, the government's cultural programme, also banned newspapers from marking its adverts and said that newspapers would have covered the content anyway, *The Times* has learnt.

Leo Varadkar's strategic communications unit is promoting Ireland 2040 in an intense campaign that includes sponsored content in national, regional and local newspapers as well as online publications and cinema adverts. Many of the sponsored articles were written by journalists, with most marked as "in partnership" with the government.

The regional media campaign, which is set to continue for several more weeks, is run by Mediaforce Ireland, which also owns Iconic, a publisher of 15 regional print and online news titles. Senior staff at several newspapers owned by Iconic have told *The Times* that they were directed by Mediaforce to make sponsored content look like news.

One source said there was an understanding at senior level in Iconic that

"this was an extremely important revenue raiser for hard-pressed local titles" though it is understood that in some cases the editors defied the demand and marked the advertorial.

Such content is a regular source of revenue for newspapers and is usually clearly marked. IAB Ireland, an independent trade association, says advertorials should be "clearly and prominently labelled and readily recognisable" as paid-for content.

In some cases, newspapers were required to edit supplied Ireland 2040 copy. In others, reporters were told to "put a local angle" on sections of copy from the national development plan.

The 15-person strategic communications unit (SCU) was set up by Mr Varadkar when he succeeded Enda Kenny as taoiseach. It is led by John Concannon, former head of Creative Ireland.

Creative Ireland ran a similar campaign, also with Mediaforce, last summer with advertorials designed to look like normal news articles in a number of papers across Ireland. Emails told editorial staff that part of Mediaforce's "deal" with the government was that the content was not to be marked as sponsored. Newspapers were also told that no other adverts could run on the same page.

One local editor told *The Times*: "This is fake news. Newspapers are struggling and the government know that, so they've got us by the balls."

Mediaforce warned that the project



Tricoloured tries Ireland made it two victories from three games in the Women's Six Nations Rugby tournament with a 35-12 victory over Wales at Donnybrook stadium in Dublin yesterday. They face Scotland in two weeks' time Sport, page 43

Good Friday agreement 'can stop hard Brexit'

Peter O'Dwyer
Senior Ireland Business Reporter

The Good Friday agreement will force the British government to deliver a soft Brexit that avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland, a minister has said.

Charlie Flanagan, the justice minister, said he believed the peace accord would ensure that Theresa May's government could not follow through on plans to leave the customs union and the single market when Britain leaves the European Union in March 2019. Doing so would create unnecessary tensions in border communities and risk a return to violence in Northern Ireland, he said.

"I am encouraged by the repeated

utterances on the part of the British prime minister... in which she says that the Good Friday agreement is not going to be set aside," Mr Flanagan told RTE's *The Week in Politics*. "The greatest threat to the security of this state comes from dissident republicans along the border, and a hard Brexit — or a difficult Brexit — will feed into tensions and could well give rise to difficulties that none of us want."

Simon Coveney, the foreign affairs minister, will meet Michel Barnier, the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, in Brussels today to discuss the EU's legal translation of agreements reached last year in the first phase of Brexit talks.

Three options were presented in December for the Irish border: a new

relationship; alternative solutions to be put forward by the UK; and a backstop option of maintaining all regulatory rules and procedures, effectively keeping the North in the customs union.

The Times reported last week that the "bulletproof" backstop would be in a "protocol" document to run alongside the main withdrawal agreement, as opposed to within the agreement itself. The protocol would give it the same legal standing, it is understood.

The Labour Party in Britain is preparing for a significant shift in policy by advocating for the UK to remain in a customs union to cushion the economic blow from Brexit. Sir Keir Starmer, the party's Brexit adviser, said

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My top 10 fashion labels Anna Murphy on what she wants now

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Meet the young
doctors debunking
myths about women

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O'Riordan was 'full of life' in voicemail hours before she died

Jennifer O'Brien

Dolores O'Riordan sounded excited and "full of life" the night before her body was found in a hotel room in London, a close friend has said.

The lead singer of the Cranberries was in good spirits in a voicemail she left on Sunday night, Dan Waite, a music producer, said yesterday. She

spoke enthusiastically about a recording session she had planned on Monday with the band Bad Wolves. Her body was found by workers at the Hilton on Park Lane at 9.05am that day.

"Dolores left me a voice message just after midnight stating how much she loved Bad Wolves' version of *Zombie*," Waite said. "She was looking forward to seeing me in the studio and recording

vocals. She sounded full of life, was joking and excited to see me and my wife this week. The news of her passing is devastating."

The Metropolitan Police said that O'Riordan's death was not suspicious and that a report would be given to the coroner's office for further investigation. The singer, 46, had bipolar disorder diagnosed in 2016 and had

suffered from chronic back pain in recent years.

She had been in a relationship with the New-York based musician and producer Olé Koretsky for more than a year and had spent New Year's Eve with him in the city before returning to Limerick to see her family this month. The couple were both members of D.A.R.K., O'Riordan's latest band, alongside

Andy Rourke, formerly the bass player for the Smiths.

O'Riordan's body is expected to be repatriated to Ireland in the coming days, and her funeral will take place in Limerick. A book of condolence was opened in her home city, where people queued at the council's headquarters.

Stars mourn, page 3
Obituary, page 46



They're big fans Young Dubliners welcome the Chinese year of the dog, which starts next month. Celebrations are being held across the capital until March 4

Varadkar will urge Trump not to create trade barriers

Jennifer Bray

Leo Varadkar will tell Donald Trump that there should be "no walls or barriers" between America and Ireland and remind the US president that trade and investment "go both ways".

Mr Varadkar is due to meet Mr Trump in the Oval Office during the taoiseach's annual St Patrick's Day trip. Speaking to *The Times*, he said that the bond between the two countries was "in our blood" and that he planned to speak to Mr Trump about migration.

When asked what his main message to the president would be, Mr Varadkar said he would tell Mr Trump that the friendship between Ireland and America was "deep and meaningful".

"It's economic, it's historic, it's cultural and it's in our blood," he said. "I'll be making the point that trade and investment, migration and tourism travel in both directions and that we should not put up any walls or barriers between us."

"I believe in freedom. I'll be telling him, in particular, about the 80,000 Americans employed by Irish companies in the US and the 40,000 Americans living happily in Ireland."

The visit will be the first time the two leaders have met. Enda Kenny, the former taoiseach, was praised internationally last year after he used a speech during his visit to talk about migration.

Mr Kenny spoke in Washington about the contribution of the Irish community in the US; *The New York Times* later called it a "lecture" for Mr Trump on immigration.

Mr Varadkar will be keenly watched by colleagues to see if he can strike a balance between communicating Irish concerns and maintaining the strong relationship with the US. Sources have said that he and Mr Trump are also likely to discuss Irish and American corporate tax arrangements, a source of contention in the EU and the US.

On a trade mission to the west coast of America last year, Mr Varadkar repeatedly emphasised to business leaders that while tax rates could change in the US, Ireland's corporate tax rates would remain stable.

Anti-abortion group hires agency that pushed Brexit

London-based consultancy to run digital operation

Ellen Coyne Senior Ireland Reporter
Patrick Maguire, Aaron Rogan

An Irish anti-abortion campaign group has hired a political consultancy linked to controversial aspects of the Brexit Leave campaign to support its drive in this year's referendum on the Eighth Amendment.

Kanto, which was founded by Thomas Borwick, has been taken on to help to run a digital campaign to keep the constitutional ban on abortion.

The agency, which is based in West-

minster, said last night that it had been contracted by anti-abortion campaigners in Ireland, but said the group had asked not to be identified to *The Times*.

Mr Borwick, 30, was technology chief for the official Vote Leave campaign in the EU referendum of 2016. Prominent Brexiters have cited the campaign's use of data and online activity as being decisive in securing victory. Some of its tactics in a separate Brexit campaign were heavily criticised.

Mr Borwick has also worked with Cambridge Analytica, a data-mining

company owned by Robert Mercer, a reclusive right-wing billionaire who bankrolled the Trump campaign and several "alt-right" operations including Breitbart News.

Steve Bannon, President Trump's former chief strategist, was previously vice-president of Cambridge Analytica, which is being investigated in the United States in connection with alleged Russian interference in the presidential election. The company denies any involvement.

Mr Borwick's Twitter biography says

Kanto will "out-organise, out-plan, out-leaflet, out-Twitter, out-work and out-vote all of its opponents". The company says on its website that it is "skilled in empowering activists both online and on the doorsteps".

Kanto will run the Irish anti-abortion group's campaign website and help with canvassing. It is not known if the agency's other services, such as a specialist team that counters "fake news" online, will be used.

Three Irish campaigners linked to
Continued on page 2, col 3

Single mother told to seek support from her abuser

Ellen Coyne Senior Ireland Reporter

Victims of domestic abuse have been told that they could lose single-parent payments unless they tried to obtain maintenance from their abusers.

Women's Aid is concerned that the government is putting women at risk by sending letters telling them to make a "reasonable effort" to contact their partners for financial support.

Spark, which represents single parents, said that it had been in contact with a number of people, including some women who were in refuges, who had received the letter.

One woman said that she was told to pursue the father of her five-month-old baby and was given two weeks to do so. This was despite the fact that at her first social welfare interview the woman had produced a court order banning the man from being near her home.

Kate, which is not her real name, said that on November 25 last year, in the early stages of her pregnancy, she was physically assaulted by her partner. She said that she left her partner of two years, who had also been emotionally and verbally abusing her.

In January she was granted a safety order banning him from threatening her or being near her home. She gave birth to their son in June and in August applied for the one-parent family allowance. "Because I was scared to go near him, I don't want him to come near me or my son," Kate, 38, said.

During her interview at an Intreo office the welfare officer had asked if she had ever lived with the baby's father and she said "no". Kate said that the officer told her that "an awful lot of couples" applied for safety orders even though they were living together "because they are so easy to get these days."

She was granted the allowance in the middle of August but on November 13 Kate received a letter from the "maintenance recovery unit" at the Depart-

ment of Social Protection. It said that the father of her baby was "legally obliged to contribute towards the cost of the one-parent family payment being paid to you".

It added: "Please note that in order to continue receiving one-parent family payment allowance you must make reasonable efforts to look for maintenance from the other parent of the child or children. Failure to do so may result in termination of the payment."

Kate said: "I got the fright of my life, I thought this was sorted. I thought the safety order made me safe. The social protection system is supposed to protect vulnerable people."

The department contacted Kate and said that the letter had been sent from another part of the department, which did not know that she was a domestic abuse victim.

Last week Regina Doherty, the social protection minister, claimed that her department never required sexual violence or domestic abuse victims to pursue partners for maintenance.

"There is absolutely nobody that would be ever required by my department to put himself or herself in a dangerous position to acquire proof. That is why I clearly [said] that a satisfying condition is somebody telling us he or she has been subject to domestic or sexual violence," Ms Doherty said.

Spark said that it had repeatedly raised concerns about victims receiving such letters from the department. Louise Bayliss, its spokeswoman, said: "The government keeps reiterating that survivors should not be forced to contact their abusers, but they have not explained how they identify who survivors are. There needs to be proper protocols in place to ensure these people are protected."

Margaret Martin, the chief executive of Women's Aid, called for comprehensive protocol and sexual violence and abuse training throughout the Department of Social Protection.

Former nurse who cooked dog faces five years in jail

Michael McHugh

A former mental health nurse who strangled and butchered a four-year-old collie before feeding it to another dog had a psychopathic disorder, a doctor said.

Dominic O'Connor, 28, faces up to five years in prison after he used a lead to kill the animal last December. He cut up the body and cooked it with an Oxo cube and onions before using it as pet food for his other dog, Shadow.

"Clearly this is an unusual and extremely disturbing case," Chris Holmes, O'Connor's barrister, told Downpatrick crown court. The father of two had no memory of the incident at his home in Roden Street, in the Co Down village of Kircubbin, he added.

O'Connor was convicted by a jury last month of animal cruelty. He bought the dog on Gumtree from a couple in Lisburn, Co Down, who had not been traced, the court was told. The other animal was rehomed.

Mr Holmes, referring to a medical report, said that O'Connor exhibited quite disturbing personal symptoms leading to a psychopathic disorder and

lacked empathy. Ian Bownes, a consultant psychiatrist, had examined the defendant.

"This is bizarre and the motivation behind it is basically inexplicable," Mr Holmes added.

Judge Piers Grant challenged the lawyer's authority to make those observations but said that much of the evidence came from O'Connor himself.

The defence said that O'Connor was adopted at the age of four, attended third-level education and was employed as a mental health nurse.

He has previous convictions for possession of an offensive weapon and common assault. His position deteriorated comprehensively in 2015 after the death of his mother and his marriage break-up, his lawyer said.

Dr Bownes' report suggested that O'Connor had a disordered personality of the psychopathic type, Mr Holmes said, and a troubled background.

Laura Ivers, the prosecution lawyer, said that the sentence imposed should be a five-year prison term, the maximum possible.

The judge adjourned the case for sentencing next week.



Plucky dip An early-morning swimmer braves the November waters at Banjo Jetty in Swanage. Weather forecast, page 21

POD PRESENTS

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JUNE BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND 2018

MONDAY, JUNE 4TH

THE WAR ON DRUGS
GRIZZLY BEAR
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