

Michael D's cheap flight

EXCLUSIVE by KIERAN DINEEN

PRESIDENT Michael D Higgins has jetted off on holiday – and flew with budget airline Ryanair. The Irish Sun on Sunday can reveal he headed to Gran Canaria with the cheap carrier and will
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THE IRISH Sun

Sunday, December 30, 2018

ON SUNDAY

€1.20
(£1.20 NI)
thesun.ie

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DWTS PRO'S HELL

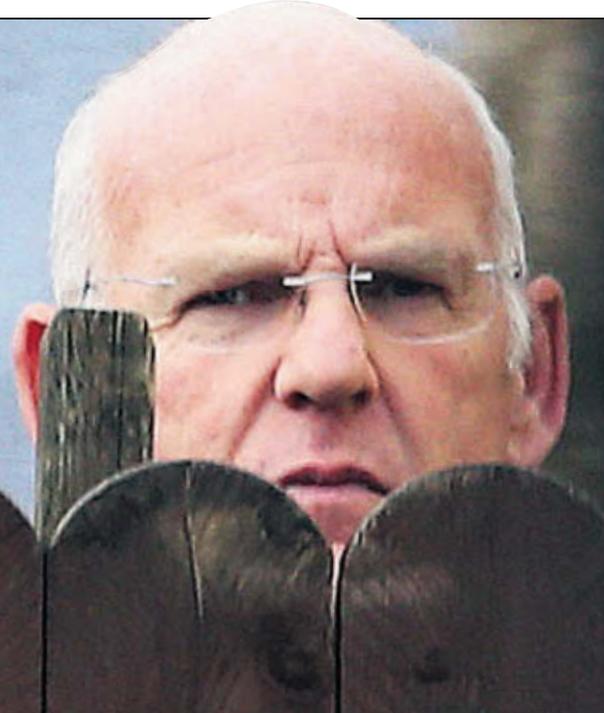
BASHED CURT GOES UNDER KNIFE TODAY

SEE PAGE EIGHT

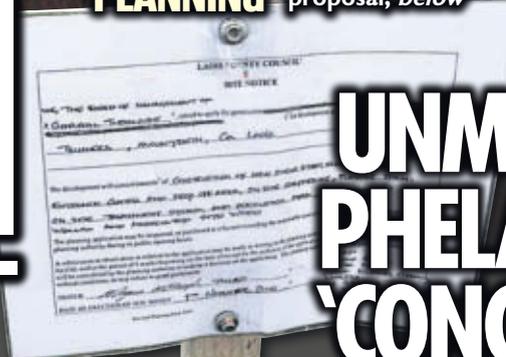


EXCLUSIVE: PARENTS' NIGHTMARE

Paedophile: Don't build this school beside me



NOTICE OF PLANNING Phelan leers over fence and school proposal, below



UNMASKED PHELAN, 64, 'CONCERNED'

A CONVICTED paedophile agrees with calls for a school not to be built across the road from him. John Phelan, 64 — who we unmask today — molested and sexually assaulted two brothers as young as nine, one of whom later took his own life. When questioned by our reporter, the deviant said “it

EXCLUSIVE by GARY MENEELY makes sense” that people have concerns about the school's proposed location, adding: “I'd object myself.” Victim Peter Fitzpatrick has waived his right to anonymity so the predator can be named
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EXCLUSIVE: SCHOOL BEING BUILT ACROSS ROAD FROM PAEDOPHILE

By GARY MENEELY

A NEW school is being built right across the road from a convicted paedophile.

John Phelan, 64, has previously served time for molesting and sexually assaulting two brothers – one of whom later took his own life.

Abuse survivor Peter Fitzpatrick today waives his right to anonymity so Phelan can be named publicly for the first time.

In an exclusive interview with the Irish Sun on Sunday, Peter tells how he is speaking out to warn against the development of the school on Phelan's doorstep.

The proposed new building is set to be built on a site beside Phelan's pad in Trumera, Co Laois.

The two-acre greenfield site, which is beside the hurling club and community hall, was provided free of charge by the parish.

Local TD Charlie Flanagan recently heralded the news that the Department of Education had sanctioned funding for the new school. But Peter today speaks out against the location amid concerns the new building will be in the vicinity of a convicted paedophile.

Meanwhile Phelan, who was convicted of abusing two brothers as young as nine, admitted to the Irish Sun on Sunday that he understood the concerns and would "object" to the school going there himself.

In an emotional appeal, Peter, who is a father himself, urged the authorities to think again.

The 41-year-old, who was molested by Phelan, told the Irish Sun on Sunday: "I don't care about adults there, they can make their own decisions. But kids don't have a choice.

"The thing that sticks in my head is what is to stop this guy taking pictures of kids, putting them on the internet, or even selling them on to a paedophile ring. Who knows?"

"But the simple fact of the matter is that I think it is wrong.

"I am disgusted that nothing has been mentioned about this before.

"My problem is that in [John Phelan's] head he is normal and kids are prey and a school is to be built across from a convicted paedophile. I don't think anyone in this country would want that."

Gaelscoil Trumera last month applied for permission for the construction of a new school.

Government funding for a replacement school building was approved for the Gaelscoil in Trumera in June.

There is no suggestion that any officials of the school or the Department of Education were aware of Phelan's proximity to the new site.

But Peter is strongly objecting to the location of the new school.

He said: "All I care about is the fact that a paedophile is going to be across from the school where innocent children are going.

"Children don't know what that means. Even if you tell your kids, they are still danger.

"Some people might take him back under the wing, there is this kind of forgive-and-forget thing. But I don't agree.

"All I know is this guy is a danger, of course he's a danger. I just think it is wrong, I think it is shameful.

"I'm one of the people who was abused by him.

"It took me a long time. The damage he done to me didn't hit me until my late 20s, early 30s.

"The fact of the matter is that this guy poses a threat and a danger. And I would hate for some child to grow up the way I grew up. In terms of my mental health.

"I was forced to see things that were way beyond my age, it was very graphic.

"The molestation was daily. I didn't know any of this at the time, for me it was just messing.

"Then it turned out he sexually abused my brother. There is all of these underlying factors.

"He got a concurrent sentence, he served four of nine years. He was

Of course he's a danger...the problem is that in his head he is normal and kids are prey

TORMENT OF SURVIVOR PETER

convicted of abusing me and my brother. He got that because he pleaded guilty. This guy is calculating, he will befriend and groom, that's how he works."

Speaking about his horror abuse, Peter says it left him with mental scars as he insisted he didn't want anyone else to suffer.

The dad, who has moved away from Laois but still visits family in the area, said: "For us, he was like the big brother.

"And he used to take us hunting and fishing and swimming, and it all led up to this. He would allow us to drive his car and feed his greyhound and all these things.

"And everything was grooming,

grooming to get us really close and when he got us really close, then he started the molestation.

"When the cops came I was able to give them information that was able to lead them to piles of pornography, cassettes, magazines that I'd seen, I was able to describe him naked and his manhood and all of this stuff.

"The pornography was hardcore. This was group sex and hardcore stuff – people being hit and people in pain. It was tough.

"It was really weird, it had a huge mental affect on me.

"I just think that if this can be avoided for somebody else, then that's the most important thing.

There is no other reason, I don't have another agenda for this."

As he relived his abuse, Peter pleaded with the authorities not to go ahead with the school at the site beside Phelan's home.

He said: "Somebody has to grant planning permission. When I found out about the new school being built outside his house, I was disgraced. I would have objected to it straight away if I had known.

"I don't consider myself a victim anymore, I'm done with that, but the simple fact of the matter is that I care about the kids. I don't think anyone should go through that.

"No child should be denied their innocence. They should be allowed

to grow up in a safe manner. I have told my kids about him, that he hurt Daddy when he was small, stay away from this man, if he ever comes near you, you've got to scream.

"He's always around. If you are outside on the road, I'll guarantee 100 per cent that he will come out.

"It's hard to handle. I'm not worried about me – I'm worried about the children."

Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan confirmed that Gaelscoil Thromaire is set for a revamp.

He said: "I am pleased to announce that the Department of Education has sanctioned funding for a replacement school premises



Fenced in . . . paedo Phelan

PLANNING ALARM

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publicly. In an exclusive interview with the Irish Sun on Sunday, Peter tells how he is speaking out to warn against the development of the school on the paedophile's doorstep in the townland of Trumera, Co Laois.

When approached by our reporter, Phelan first said: "Where did you get the name? Where did you get my name?" We informed the 64-year-old we were doing a story about concerns regarding the proposed new school's proximity to his house.

Asked if he had served time in prison for sexual offences against children, Phelan said: "Yes...yeah, right." And the convicted paedophile declared he doesn't want the school built outside his house.

Phelan said: "It makes sense (to have concerns). I would object to the school going there myself. Because it is going to create problems. Not for me, but it is going to create problems for parents if they are concerned about it, certainly, and why not?"

Asked if any concerns had been raised to him, Phelan said: "Yes, I understand, of course. But that is 30

years ago, it is done and dusted as far as I am concerned. I have moved on.

"You forget about these things, and carry on. I have no ill feelings against anybody, I have served my time, I got on great in prison, I was treated exceptionally well and I came home to good friends and family.

"What more could you ask for? It doesn't concern me anymore, it is 30 years ago, it is actually 40 years ago."

Questioned if he understands the concerns, Phelan said: "I understand, yes, of course. That's natural and why wouldn't they? Why wouldn't they?"

"And if the truth be known again, things would have been very different today with the law of 30 years ago.

"If I had been honest with myself, if I had been honest with the police, if they had asked me questions, if they had asked me direct questions...nobody ever asked me why I done it. And if things were different today, I would say yes.

"I would deny a lot of stuff I did do, I went along with things I didn't do, I thought it would just blow over and it didn't. It is past tense now, it was 40 years ago."



Concerns . . . Phelan was approached by our reporter

‘This guy’s calculating, he will befriend and groom... that’s how he works’
— PETER ON PHELAN

for Trumera Gaelscoil. For too long, students and teachers in Trumera have worked out of less than ideal conditions and I am pleased that they can now look forward to a replacement school building on a greenfield site which was provided free of charge by the parish.

"I wish to pay tribute to the Board of Management and parents who have campaigned for an upgraded school facility for their children for many years.

"In particular I wish to pay tribute to School Principal Mr Liam O'Neill, not only for his commitment to the building project but for his dedication to the Irish Language and Culture throughout his teaching

career. Education is key to our ambitions as a nation and we're investing more in education than ever to help deliver on this ambition – over €10billion in 2018, the biggest ever budget for education."

The recently-retired principal of the school is former GAA President Liam O'Neill.

The principal of Gaelscoil Thromaire near Mountrath closed the doors of his single-room school for the last time on June 22, just as funding was agreed by the Department of Education to build a brand new school building, replacing a 117-year-old building and single prefab. Speaking at the time of the announcement in June of this year,

O'Neill said: "This is not just a new school, a school anchors a community. Our hurling club gives it recognition.

"But the fact that the department has endorsed what we are doing is a vote of confidence in the community of Trumera.

"For me, for my family, friends and neighbours, I couldn't tell you the joy."

O'Neill told how the present school building is the oldest in Ireland to still operate as a school without extensive refurbishment. He

said: "It was well overdue, we are not getting anything we are not entitled to. It was a long process."

The school currently teaches 36 boys and girls who come from a wide catchment to learn through Irish.

O'Neill, at the time, said he expected that the new building, going on a two-acre site beside the hurling club and community hall, will be able to take more pupils.

He said: "It is new era. A new principal will be appointed to build on what we have done and take the

school to a different level." In response to concerns that the new school will be in the vicinity of a convicted paedophile, a Department of Education spokesperson told the Irish Sun on Sunday: "Under the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management is responsible for the governance and management of a school and for ensuring that as far as practicable children are safe from harm while availing of the school's services.

"The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and An Garda Síochana are the statutory bodies responsible for assessing and investigating child protection concerns."

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