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# Martin in the dark over Cowen drink-driving ban

» New minister 'sorry' after he was put off the road for three months

**Fionnán Sheahan**  
EXCLUSIVE

NEW Agriculture Minister Barry Cowen says he is "profoundly sorry" for being banned from driving after being caught drink-driving.

The revelation of Mr Cowen's three-month disqualification from driving follows the controversy over Taoiseach Micheál Martin's ministerial selections.

Mr Cowen was stopped at a Garda checkpoint four years ago, halfway between Dublin and his home in Offaly.

The Fianna Fáil TD was on his way back from the All-Ireland football final. He had two drinks before the game and something to eat after it.

Mr Cowen was breath-tested on the spot, where alcohol was detected. He was again tested at a Garda station. He was found to be over the limit.

Mr Cowen was punished with a Fixed Charge Penalty Notice, a €200 fine, and he was disqualified from driving for three months.

The case did not go to court as the amount of alcohol in his system did not reach the level required for a prosecution.

Confirming his drink-driving disqualification, the Agriculture Minister told the *Irish Independent* of his "shame".

"I am profoundly sorry for having made that mistake. I am deeply apologetic to all those close to me and to my colleagues, for this appalling lapse of judgement," he said.

The incident occurred on the night of September 18, 2016, just hours after the final between Dublin and Mayo.

Mr Martin didn't know about the offence when he selected Mr Cowen as a minister.

Continued on Page 4



**Upset:** Jason and Martha Sheridan with their daughter Clodagh (7), from Rosslare, Co Wexford. They have to pay €250 for a Covid-19 test before Clodagh can go to the Beacon private hospital for a procedure. PHOTO: PATRICK BROWNE

Hospitals charge for Covid-19 test before treatment

PRIVATE hospitals have been accused of "appalling" behaviour after it emerged they are imposing new charges for Covid-19 tests before people can attend the hospitals.

The fees being imposed range from €75 for those who have to undergo a day procedure in a private hospital, to €250 for inpatient procedures.

The news comes despite private hospitals benefiting from effectively being taken over by the State.

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# Taoiseach only found out about his new

## Barry Cowen breathalysed after drinking at 2016 All-Ireland final

Continued from Page 1

The incident occurred on September 18, 2016 at 8.18pm. The drawn All-Ireland football final between Dublin and Mayo was played that day.

Mr Cowen was stopped at a Garda checkpoint at Kilsharroe, Carbury, Co Kildare, at 8.18pm.

The location is near the M4

Dublin-to-Galway motorway at Enfield and close to the Offaly border.

He was driving an 09-D registered, light-coloured, Renault Megane.

Mr Cowen was 49 when the incident occurred.

Mr Cowen said he was "ashamed of it and embarrassed by it".

"It was the day of the All-Ire-

land football final. I had two drinks before the game and something to eat after it and drove back to Offaly," he said.

The Fianna Fáil TD was dropping a friend home on the way to his own home in Clara, Co Offaly.

Mr Cowen said he was driving towards Edenderry, near Carbery, when he was stopped by a garda and breathalysed.

"That test and the subsequent test at the station showed I was marginally over the limit," he said.

Mr Cowen said he was penalised with a fixed notice

and disqualification. "It was a stupid mistake and the fact it was marginal is no defence," he said.

The ban arose as Mr Cowen was not driving on a full licence. He was categorised as a "specified driver" as he was driving on a Learner Permit.

As a result, he was hit with the three-month ban. A driver on a full licence would have got penalty points and not a ban for the offence.

The case did not go to court as the level of alcohol was within the lower levels.

At the time, the law on



Minister Barry Cowen

drink-driving determined a concentration 10mg to 35mg of alcohol per 100ml of breath as being over the limit for learner drivers.

The Taoiseach only found out about Mr Cowen's drink-driving disqualification when contacted by the *Irish Independent* for comment.

"I first became aware of this issue on Friday afternoon. I have spoken to Minister Cowen and I accept that his remorse about this incident is genuine.

"I am disappointed that I learned about it in this way

## The ruthless altarboy: how Micheál Martin has a habit of turning on those loyal to him

The Taoiseach didn't get to where he is today without separating friendships from the politics, writes **Fionnán Sheahan**



**T**HE circus is back in town. Fianna Fáil has returned in style. Only a week into the party's first taste of power in almost a decade and already there is disgruntlement, disaffection and disillusion. Allied to the anger, outrage and upset are allegations of heaves, conspiracies and botched strokes.

The skulduggery within the party showed how politics was so boring for the past decade.

The selection of ministers has left a dozen Fianna Fáil TDs disappointed at being left out.

Taoiseach Micheál Martin's rise in politics has been marked by an uncanny ability to dodge the blame. But this time the fingers are only pointing in one direction amid growing uproar in Fianna Fáil.

Never mind the sweeter-than-light image, the new Taoiseach has a long-standing tradition at local, national and party level of casting aside people who invested in him.

Dara Calleary and the rest are the latest in a line of figures to fall foul of the ruthless altarboy from Cork.

It's not personal, it's just business. Fianna Fáil TDs are realising Martin will let nothing stand in the way of his ambition.

### THE SCREECH OF JOY

Up in the visitors' gallery of the Dáil Chamber, there was a nervous giddiness among the small group of family and friends of the youngest member of the Fianna Fáil frontbench. Micheál Martin was by no means a certainty to be included in Bertie Ahern's new Cabinet on June 26, 1997.

Martin was a big deal in Cork. Fianna Fáil had won six of the 10 seats in the second

**'He was very cold. Those close to him say he has no loyalty'**

city 20 days earlier. But Joe Walsh was the big beast in Cork Fianna Fáil. Martin, the party's education spokesman, at 36, might have to wait his turn.

When his name was called out last by the new Taoiseach, a family member, believed to be his wife Mary, let out a screech of joy and relief from the visitors' gallery. The group was quickly shushed by ushers. The incident stood out for observers as it was unusual.

Martin had arrived on the big stage. In the following weeks, the Martin gang had a celebration party at the home

of a supporter, Deirdre Forde. There was drink taken and rebel songs sung.

Along with fellow Martin aides, Humphrey Murphy and Dermot O'Mahony, Forde would soon become known as part of the minister's entourage. The trio were appointed to the governing body of UCC and Forde became a councillor on Cork County Council two years later. Martin had handed his seat on Cork City Council to his brother, Séan, joining his sidekick, Terry Shannon. The base was well covered.

When Martin was health minister, Forde was appointed to the Nursing Board. Come the local elections in 2004, a new force arrived on the pitch as young buck Michael McGrath came in with almost 4,000 votes - second only nationally to a fella called Varadkar up in Dublin. Due to constituency boundary changes, either McGrath or Forde would be the general election candidate alongside Martin in 2007.

"Micheál dropped Deirdre like a hot potato for McGrath. He probably had to or was told to, but she had worked for Micheál," a local source said.

Come the next local elections in 2009, Martin's twin brother, Pádraig, was lined up to run in Forde's patch. She



got the hint and joined Fine Gael. Martin's brother flopped. Forde was elected handsomely. The alliance ended.

### BOOT, B\*\*\*\*K, BITE

Martin was reared on the cut and thrust of politics in his constituency of Cork South-Central. In an early campaign, he included a photo of him in his UCC graduation gown on a leaflet to portray the 'local boy come good'. But it was a dirty game with no saints. There was a celebrated local rivalry between Martin and fellow TDs Batt O'Keeffe and John Dennehy. Dennehy famously branded the party strategy on candidate cooperation as "boot, b\*\*\*\*k and bite".

"The role of the local director of elections in the constituency was akin to the bishop on

All-Ireland final day: throw in the ball, and get off the pitch," a party activist reflects.

Come the 2002 general election, Martin was a heavy-hitter in Ahern's government as health minister. He was expected to deliver three seats.

His personal duels saw him miss the big picture. A failure to manage the vote saw Dennehy nearly lose out as Martin romped. As an epic count and recounts continued for the week, Fianna Fáil's national director of elections, the late PJ Mara, fumed in the corridors of Leinster House about "f\*\*\*\*ing Micheál Martin" possibly costing the party a seat.

Martin was among the ministers who stepped up come the next general election as Ahern went missing amid damning revelations about

his personal finances at the Mahon Tribunal.

"He was very cold, very hard to read. According to those close to him, he has no loyalty.

"He was happy to support Bertie through the Tribunal days, he accepted ministers had to do it, but he was complaining that others weren't doing the same," an adviser to Ahern recalls. Once Ahern was gone as Taoiseach, though, all bets were off. When the Mahon Tribunal reported in March 2012, Martin was quick to distance himself from Ahern, who had repeatedly promoted him across 14 years as Fianna Fáil leader and 11 years as Taoiseach. He proposed to expel Ahern as a member of Fianna Fáil. Ahern ultimately jumped before he was pushed, but not without a

# minister's drink-driving ban yesterday

and have made that clear to him," he told this newspaper last night.

Mr Martin is understood to be raging with Mr Cowen.

He spoke with the Agriculture Minister last night.

The Taoiseach had to tell his Coalition partners, Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and Green Party leader Eamon Ryan, about Mr Cowen's disqualification.

Mr Cowen also admitted he had not informed the Taoiseach previously. When asked if he should have told Mr Martin, he said: "Should I have? That's a matter of opinion. I accept

my punishment in this civil matter," he said.

"It hasn't impinged on my ability to do my job."

Mr Cowen repeated that he was sorry.

"I am profoundly sorry and acknowledge it was an appalling lapse and one which I have to accept and learn from, as have many others," he said.

At the time of the incident, Mr Cowen was Fianna Fáil's frontbench spokesman for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

In response to a query from the *Irish Independent* detail-

ing the event, the Garda Press Office said: "A road traffic incident occurred on the 18/09/2016 at Kilshaneroe, Carbury, Co Kildare, which resulted in a Fixed Charge Penalty Notice (FCPN) being issued.

"It is An Garda Síochána policy not to identify or confirm the identity of any person involved in a Garda interaction."

Mr Cowen was appointed as the Minister for Agriculture last Saturday by the Taoiseach. He was a member of the Fianna Fáil negotiating team

in the coalition talks with Fine Gael and the Green Party and has served as the party's public expenditure spokesman for the past two years.

## Apology

Mr Cowen has been a TD since 2011, taking the seat held before him by his brother, former Taoiseach Brian Cowen, and their late father, Ber Cowen, almost continuously since 1969.

The Agriculture Minister was scheduled by Fianna Fáil to appear on RTE's flagship political programme 'The Week In

Politics' tomorrow morning.

Mr Cowen's apology for drink driving comes at the end of a fractious opening week for the new Government and Mr Martin in particular.

The Taoiseach has faced a rebellion in his own party over his ministerial selections.

Mr Cowen is one of the five full Cabinet ministers that Mr Martin selected ahead of Government Chief Whip Dara Calleary and others last Saturday.

Several Fianna Fáil TDs, including Mr Calleary, Michael Moynihan, Willie O'Dea and Jackie Cahill, have

expressed their disappointment or anger at being left out of the ministerial line-up.

Fianna Fáil TD Jim O'Callaghan turned down a junior ministerial position, committing himself to voicing the party's identity in Government from the backbenches.

The failure to include a full Cabinet minister from the west of Ireland in his Cabinet has resulted in a regional and grassroots backlash against Mr Martin.

Mr Cowen's offence will now raise questions about Mr Martin's judgment.



**Past loyalties:** Clockwise from main: New Taoiseach Micheál Martin with his wife Mary after he arrived home in Cork; Dara Calleary after the convention this week; Deirdre Forde; and Bertie Ahern. PHOTOS: MICHAEL MAC SWEENEY/PROVISION AND COLLINS

I would be very concerned about the longevity of a government with not just with internal, but outright rebellion.

"If I was the CEO of Fianna Fáil Inc, I would be putting out a profit warning," a Fine Gael minister said.

Fianna Fáil's own ministers are left in no doubt now about Martin. The treatment of Dara Calleary confirmed the party leader does not consult with any TDs on decisions. The cutting adrift of Jim O'Callaghan is also a mystery. Mara's description of Charlie Haughey's dictatorial style - 'Uno duce, una voce' - springs to mind a little.

"It is utterly bizarre. You pick a guy to be your deputy leader and then you don't pick him in your Cabinet. The optics of it are really bad. Did he offend Micheál Martin in some way? Nobody knows how this man's mind works," a minister says.

Martin has had to put up with griping about his leadership style for the best part of his nine years in the job. He has reached the pinnacle now, but the fall will be hard when it all comes to an end.

"Once he's out of that Taoiseach's role, he's had his day. He's delusional if he thinks he's going to lead us into the next election. He'll find some bolthole in Europe," the minister adds.

Certainly in the past six weeks, as there was uncertainty over the coalition deal getting off the ground, there was a lot of chatter within the party about Martin's future.

One TD, who was not a leadership contender, is said to have been sounding people out about replacing Martin in that 'no deal' eventuality.

"There were people sitting back letting the talks process take its course. If the Greens thing went awry, then it was into a completely different realm," a party TD says.

A former TD who has been talking to the party faithful this past week is more bleak in his outlook for Martin, with rebellion in the air.

"Micheál Martin won't be there in 12 months' time. He'll be taken out by the party. The new TDs are not conditioned

to the fight. The older TDs have no say in the party and they are treated like schoolchildren. It's unreal," the former TD said.

Across local and national, party and non-party, those who have come into contact with Martin say there is a steely streak beneath the Taoiseach's wholesome image.

"What are we surprised at here? He didn't get to where he is today without upsetting people. Micheál Martin only cares about Micheál Martin. Smell the coffee, this is going on for decades: 'Project Micheál'. There was only one motivation recently, not to be the only leader of Fianna Fáil not to become Taoiseach," a political figure in Cork says.

A former Cabinet colleague reckons his outlook has changed during his time as Fianna Fáil leader and that

## He is best summed up by: 'That's friendship; this is politics'

Martin never really had a cabal around him in Leinster House.

"I think he's more ruthless now. I think he's hardened in the years in opposition because the opportunity to become Taoiseach was drifting away from him, so he had to make decisions. He was definitely softer in tone and more empathetic when he was in government."

A former adviser who has observed Fianna Fáil leaders closely for the last quarter century accepts there's "a bit of steel there" and that he can be deliberately aloof.

"He was always a bit of a loner. Bertie was a networker without being close to many. Cowen was clubbable and would be down having pints. You'd rarely see Micheál with any of the other TDs. He wouldn't have too many friends in the parliamentary party," the official says.

A long-time associate sums up Martin's view on personal loyalties versus political pragmatism: "He said it to me and he meant it: 'That's friendship. This is politics.'"

lot of internal rancour. Young supporters of Martin's who put the boot into Ahern, like future TD Lisa Chambers, were colourfully nicknamed "child soldiers with loaded Uzis" by Noel Ahern, 'De Brudder' of the former Taoiseach. In the intervening years, while relations are cordial between Ahern and Martin when they bump into each other, Fianna Fáil has not deferred to its former Taoiseach's expertise.

Ironically, his views on Brexit and the EU are respected in Fine Gael and Leo Varadkar and Simon Coveney used his networking abilities extensively during the recent UN Security Council campaign.

## OLD TIES SEVERED

Bertie Ahern is not the only former close associate to find

himself abandoned by Martin. Former MEP Brian Crowley was mooted to be seeking a run for the Presidential election in 2011. Martin was having none of it, ruling the party out of contesting the election, but not before he sounded out the late broadcaster Gay Byrne about running.

Crowley was again successfully elected in the 2014 European elections, but left the ALDE liberal grouping the party is aligned to in the European Parliament and effectively became an Independent.

The claims Martin and Crowley were close is put down by some to those outside Cork thinking everyone from the Rebel County is tied at the hip.

"They were initially close when Micheál was minister for education. Probably that Cork

thing. They were always looking for another Jack Lynch," a party source said.

Former Fianna Fáil minister Mary Hanafin was another who was seen to be dumped on by Martin. Although she was regarded as a friend of the party leader when they were in Cabinet together, Martin and his party headquarters first backed, but then tried to block, her run in the local elections in 2014. Hanafin managed to submit the nomination papers herself to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and the party's efforts to withdraw her name were foiled. She was successfully elected to the council twice. However, Martin didn't give her any backing for a European election run in Dublin.

Whatever about Calleary

who is in Cabinet, the exclusion of Cork North-West TD Michael Moynihan is seen as a sign Martin doesn't recognise loyalty to the leader.

"He took the hits on the constituencies committee. It was all cover for the leader to drop candidates or tell people what they didn't want to hear. Moynihan was his number one follower. There is a bond of friendship or loyalty between them - or there was," a former party official says.

## THE STEELY LONER

After a relatively mundane decade in power, Fine Gael figures are watching the Fianna Fáil activity with their mouths agape at the carry-on.

"Everyone was talking about the Greens. The biggest Achilles heel now is Fianna Fáil.

## Look back in anger

» 'Angry white girl' Alanis Morissette finds her happy place

» Donal Skehan's summer suppers



## The Irish naval force taking on the drug traffickers

» Review



## Barry McGuigan

'I keep thinking my daughter will walk through the door'

» Saturday Sport



HOW DAD OF RESCUED GALWAY TEEN NEARLY LINED OUT FOR JACK'S IRELAND P2

# Tourism chief on holidays in Italy

**Exclusive:** Chairman of Fáilte Ireland is also taking two Irish breaks

**Fionnán Sheahan**  
IRELAND EDITOR

THE head of the country's tourism promotion board has travelled to Italy on holiday, the *Irish Independent* can reveal.

The Government is advising people not to travel abroad and to "holiday at home" as the Covid-19 pandemic plays havoc with the country's economy and health service.

Fáilte Ireland is carrying out a "major drive to encourage people to take domestic breaks" and the Government has introduced a tax rebate to encourage people to spend their holidays here.

However, Fáilte Ireland chairman Michael Cawley went to Italy on his holidays. The Mediterranean country is on the Green List of countries people can visit without having to quarantine on their return.

Mr Cawley last night confirmed he was in Italy but said he plans to take two holidays in Ireland in September and October.

Continued on Page 4



**Starmaker:** Scaling heights on the other side of the camera

FRESHLY Emmy-nominated for her work on the acclaimed television show *Normal People*, Irish casting director Louise Kiely tells Amy O'Connor why she swapped her own dream of becoming an actor for the thrill of turning other actors into stars. PHOTO: MARK CONDREN **Full story in Weekend Magazine**

## The shadow of fear that hung over garda killing

**Catherine Fegan and Robin Schiller**

DETECTIVES probing Detective Garda Adrian Donohoe's murder had to battle a culture of silence and complete disrespect for law and order, the man who led the investigation has said.

Retired Detective Inspector Pat Marry said doors "were closed at every turn" in the garda's efforts to bring the killers to justice.

Mr Marry said he looked arrogant killer Aaron Brady in the eye when he charged him with capital murder after a massive investigation.

The trial of Brady, who was convicted of capital murder, was marred by witness intimidation and harassment.

The *Irish Independent* can reveal that Brady (29) beat up a witness who had overheard him boasting in a New York bar about the murder of Garda Donohoe (41).

**Full reports: Pages 12-14**

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# Coronavirus emergency

## Pub hours may be extended in bid to halt

∴ Social distancing must be kept as infections climb – chief medic

**Philip Ryan**

PUB opening hours could be extended under plans being considered by the Government.

After insisting all pubs and restaurants must close their doors by 11pm, ministers are

now examining whether they should be allowed to stay open later.

The move would be aimed at discouraging people from having house parties and instead spend time in regulated licensed settings such as pubs.

“We don’t want people spending hours in restaurants and gastropubs late into the night,” a government source said.

“At the same time, we do not want to displace people from these settings to house parties and after parties. It’s not an exact science.”

It comes as acting chief medical officer Dr Ronan Glynn last night warned people to continue to practise social distancing as 67 new cases of

Covid-19 were confirmed by the Department of Health.

The National Public Health Emergency Team (Nphet) recommended that pubs and restaurants should close by 10.30pm but the Cabinet decided to extend this to 11pm.

**Postponed**

If closing time were to be extended it would only apply to pubs that serve food as it is still unclear if those that only provide drink will be permit-



**Warning:** Acting chief medical officer Dr Ronan Glynn

ted to reopen later this month.

The Government has twice postponed the reopening of so called “wet pubs” due to concerns it could lead to a rise in new coronavirus cases.

Earlier this week, Tánaiste Leo Varadkar said pubs may have to make a “sacrifice” for the rest of society and remain closed ahead of schools opening.

Mr Varadkar insisted the priority was to get schools reopened and hinted the

## Chairman of Fáilte Ireland has travelled to Italy on holiday

**From Page 1**

“It [the holiday] was arranged by my family some months ago. I didn’t want to disappoint them,” he said.

Mr Cawley said he will be taking two holidays in Ireland in September and October.

“I understand what the Government is doing and I support it,” he said.

“I am going to spend two holidays supporting the Irish tourism industry.”

Mr Cawley said he has been working hard with Fáilte Ireland and has been on every single pandemic call. He said he has not seen his son in the US in six months and probably won’t this year.

His daughter lives in Europe and he met her on this holiday. Mr Cawley said he knew other people had to cancel their pre-booked holidays abroad this summer and had lost money as a result.

“I sympathise with people and I support what the Government is doing absolutely. It is a family decision and a personal decision,” he said.

The former Ryanair deputy CEO was appointed as chairman of the tourism body by Tánaiste Leo Varadkar when he was tourism minister in 2014.

He was reappointed last year by then minister Shane Ross.

Mr Cawley worked with Ryanair for 17 years and was the airline’s deputy chief executive and chief operating officer until his retirement.



**Flight:** Chairman of Fáilte Ireland Michael Cawley

He had previously worked as the airline’s chief financial officer and commercial director.

Prior to his time with Ryanair, he worked with the Gowan Group Limited, a distributor for Peugeot and

**Fáilte Ireland has been avidly promoting domestic tourism**

Citroen cars in Ireland.

A spokesperson for Fáilte Ireland said the organisation would not be commenting.

Fáilte Ireland has been avidly promoting domestic tourism.

Its current heavyweight domestic marketing campaign is ‘Ireland, Make a Break for it’. In the past month, it

launched a new-look website for domestic visitors, DiscoverIreland.ie, as well as a new domestic marketing campaign, ‘Come here to me Dublin’, which encourages those living in Dublin to visit the attractions in the city.

Additionally, Fáilte Ireland has recently collaborated with RTÉ on a four-part TV series *No Place Like Home*.

Fáilte Ireland has also drawn up a Covid Safety Charter for the tourism industry to instil public confidence in the safety of tourism businesses.

After publishing the Green List, Taoiseach Micheál Martin said the advice was to “holiday at home”.

“I am clear that the safest thing to do is not to travel. That is the clear message. We are saying to people to holiday at home this year.

“We have, in respect of those 15 countries, applied the normal precautions appellation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which basically means when they return home they will not have to restrict their movements,” he said.

Fáilte Ireland says Covid-19 has been “catastrophic” for tourism in this country.

Speaking at the Dáil Covid-19 committee last month, Fáilte Ireland chief executive Paul Kelly said tourism was of “vital importance” to Ireland.

“Economically, tourism was hit first, hit hardest and will take the longest to recover,” he said.



## Mushroom plant hit by outbreak

**Anne-Marie Walsh, Senan Molony and Gabija Gataveckaite**

A MUSHROOM plant has been hit by a Covid-19 outbreak while meat processors in the midlands have begun to reopen.

Walsh Mushrooms in Golden, Co Tipperary, has closed after a number of staff tested positive. This followed its first incidence of the virus, when a worker was diagnosed during self-isolation.

The new workplace clus-

ter was confirmed as it was revealed there have been 26 outbreaks across the meat and poultry processing industry up to last Saturday.

A Department of Health spokesperson said the outbreaks are associated with 1,407 cases, of which 35 people have been hospitalised and no deaths reported.

A government minister called for more lightning checks on food premises after the mushroom plant cases.

Public Expenditure Minister Michael McGrath said after a

Cabinet meeting: “We do want to see more unannounced inspections.”

“There is far more value in a visit that is unannounced rather than one that is scheduled and flagged in advance. You get to see what is likely to be usually done in a premises. “This is a matter for the Health and Safety Authority, but we want to see more unannounced visits.”

He added that the Government would “not hesitate” to act if the situation warranted it in the short term.