



**The award-winning newsletter of  
students and staff of UCC's Department  
of Government and Politics**

**Issue 86, Monday 19 January 2026**

# GOVERNMENT TIMES



**'Councillors understand  
local needs, aspirations,  
and challenges' –  
Minister John Cummins at  
CLRG25.**

**See pages 4-7**

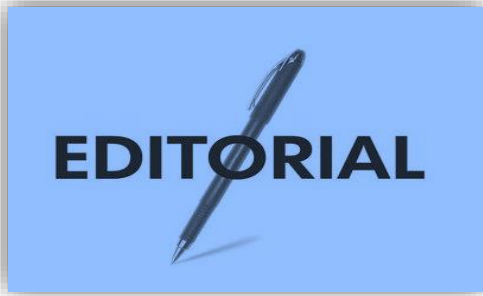
**Nicola Sturgeon to  
deliver the 2026 Philip  
Monahan Memorial  
Lecture.**

**See pages 13-14**



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## **BIG EVENTS ON THE HORIZON, INCLUDING MARY McALEESE AND NICOLA STURGEON**

Happy New Year and welcome to the largest-ever issue of *Government Times* which chronicles the activities of the Department and Government and Politics over the past two months. It has been an exceptional period of time featuring the 10<sup>th</sup> public lecture series of the Centre for Local and Regional Governance (CLRG), the launch of *Leading the Way*, the inaugural Active Citizenship Day, graduations, PhD successes and a study trip to Brussels, to name but a few activities.

As well as describing recent events, we also look forward to the visits of former President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, and the former Scottish First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon. The Government Ball is also on the horizon and it is always a highlight of the academic year. It is worth noting too that *How Ireland Voted 2024* (with our own Professor Theresa Reidy as co-editor) will be launched on Wednesday night in Hodges Figgis by Pat Leahy, Political Editor of *The Irish Times*. Have a wonderful night, Theresa.

Without any further ado, it is our pleasure to invite you to read this issue. We hope you enjoy it!

*Aodh and Hugh*

**Dr. Aodh Quinlivan and Hugh Ahern**

**Editors, *Government Times***

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**\*Dr. Aodh Quinlivan (Department of Government and Politics) and Hugh Ahern (BSc Government and Political Science, First Year) are the editors of *Government Times* for the 2025/2026 academic year.**

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# COVER STORY

## REVITALISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT - REPORT FROM CLRG 2025

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Public Lecture Series of UCC's Centre for Local and Regional Governance (CLRG) was held on Wednesday 5 November, with the theme of 'Revitalising Local Government'. The CLRG was officially launched in February 2016, and its aim is to foster innovative research in the areas of local and regional governance. The CLRG also provides a platform where a wide variety of stakeholders including politicians, practitioners, business interests, civic society, and academics can collaborate on innovative research projects. It remains the only research centre in Ireland dedicated to local government.

The opening remarks were delivered by the Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Fergal Dennehy, who stressed that in a rapidly changing globalised world, the local level is becoming more important. He also raised the issue of whether local councillors should be full-time and salaried. The Lord Mayor was followed by Dr. Aodh Quinlivan who presented his CLRG Director's Report, highlighting the publication of a new book, *Leading the Way*. Co-written with John Ger O'Riordan and Anne Twomey, published by Cork City Libraries, and supported by Cork City Council's Women's Caucus and Commemorations Programme, *Leading the Way* profiles 12 inspirational women who have shaped local government in Cork city. These women range from suffragettes like Anna Haslam and Susanne Rouviere Day, to the six women who have served as Lord Mayor, to the current Chief Executive in City Hall, Valerie O'Sullivan.



Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Fergal Dennehy



Two CLRG annual awards were then presented. The Jane Dowdall Undergraduate Essay Prize was awarded to a current First Year student in UCC, David O'Connell. Paul Moynihan received the Philip Monahan Local Government Recognition Award; he recently retired after 43 years of dedicated service in Cork City Council and Cork County Council.



**Chief Executive of Cork City Council, Valerie O'Sullivan and Professor Colin Copus.**

Next, three guest speakers delivered thought-provoking lectures. The Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, John Cummins TD, discussed local government reform plans and the ongoing work of the Local Democracy Taskforce. Minister Cummins concluded by stating: 'It is my view that we must give our elected representatives greater authority, not as an act of political generosity, but as a recognition of their important roles in society. Councillors understand local needs, aspirations, and challenges.' The Chief Executive of Cork City Council, Valerie O'Sullivan, presented her vision as to how local government might be revitalised in the second city. She highlighted Cork City Council's proud track record of service and infrastructure delivery and argued that more could be achieved with greater resources. Finally, the renowned UK academic, Professor Colin Copus (a former councillor himself) analysed the role of the local councillor in the 21st century. He criticised the centralised nature of local government in the UK and the tendency to merge councils and create large entities removed from the public. A successful evening ended with a lively questions and answers session, expertly chaired by UCC's Professor Theresa Reidy.



**UCC's Professor Theresa Reidy and Dr. Aodh Quinlivan.**

## DAVID O'CONNELL AND PAUL MOYNIHAN WIN ANNUAL CLRG AWARDS

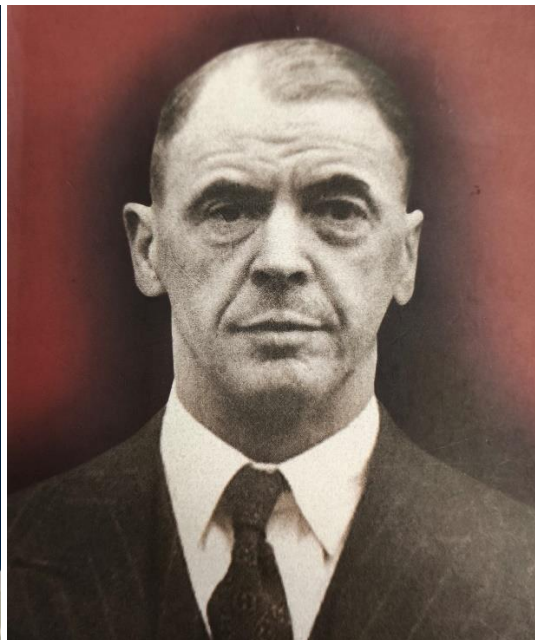


**Left:** The Lord Mayor of Cork presented the Jane Dowdall Essay Prize to David O'Connell (BSc Government and Political Science I) based on his excellent assignment analysing central-local relations in Ireland.

**Right:** Jane Dowdall was elected Lord Mayor of Cork on Tuesday 23 June 1959; she was the first woman to hold the office.

## JANE DOWDALL UNDERGRADUATE ESSAY AWARD

YEAR	AWARD WINNER
2016/17	Lewis O'Shea
2017/18	Diarmaid Hanley
2018/19	Luc O'Leary
2019/20	Sinéad McMahon
2020/21	Conor Ruth
2021/22	Conor Brennan
2022/23	Robert Palmer
2023/24	Alan O'Brien
2024/25	Jessica Hurley
2025/26	David O'Connell



**Left:** The Lord Mayor of Cork presented the Philip Monahan Local Government Recognition Award to Paul Moynihan; Paul retired in 2025 after 43 years of dedicated service in Cork City Council and Cork County Council.

**Right:** Philip Monahan served as Commissioner in Cork from 1924-1929; he was then appointed as Ireland's first City Manager and stayed in that position from 1929-1959.

## PHILIP MONAHAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION AWARD

YEAR	AWARD WINNER
2017	Pat Ruane
2018	Long Pham; Liam Ronayne
2019	Richard Kelly; Pat Ledwidge
2020	Ben Dalton O'Sullivan
2021	John Ger O'Riordan
2022	Mary Roche
2023	Bríd Quinn
2024	Ann Doherty
2025	Paul Moynihan





## **BSc Government and Political Science – New Director Appointed**



**Congratulations to Dr.  
Emmanuelle Schön-  
Quinlivan who took over as  
the Director of the BSc  
Government and Political  
Science at the start of  
January.**

## **Visiting Fellowships**

**Dr. Laurence Davis** has formally been appointed as a named Deputy Director of UCC's Future Humanities Institute (FHI), of which he is already a member of the Executive Board and Co-Convenor of its Eco-Humanities Research Group. In addition, Laurence has been awarded two Visiting Fellowships at Cambridge University in the UK in 2026, the first with its Centre for Research in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CRASSH) and the second in association with Wolfson College, Cambridge (below).

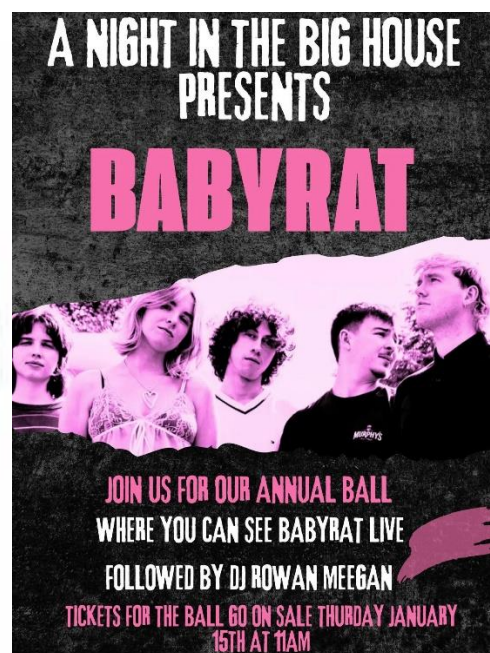






# GOVERNMENT BALL ON 28 JANUARY

The Annual Government Ball will take place on Wednesday 28 January at the Metropole Hotel. This year, the Government and Politics Society has teamed up with the Economics Society and the Women in Business and Leadership Society. The evening promises to be an enjoyable one, featuring an excellent dinner followed by live music from **Babyrat** and then DJ **Rowan Meegan**.



**DON'T MISS OUT! GET YOUR TICKETS NOW.**



## **GEORGE GILL CO-OPTED TO CORK COUNTY COUNCIL**



On Monday 12 January, **George Gill** (on right of picture above, with Séamus McGrath TD) was co-opted to Cork County Council, replacing the late Fianna Fáil Councillor Patrick Gerard Murphy, who passed away last September. George was selected at a Bantry LEA party convention in the Maritime Hotel in Bantry on Friday 9 January, winning the vote against former Councillor Danny Crowley by 55 to 48. Previously, he narrowly missed out on securing a seat in the 2019 local elections. George completed the BSc Government and Political Science in 2015 and then the International Public Policy and Diplomacy Masters the following year. He joins fellow Government graduate, Patrick Donovan, in County Hall. George works as a Southern Region Executive with the Construction Industry Federation (CIF).

**‘I will give my all to live up to the level of service that Patrick Gerard showed during his time at Cork County Council’ – George Gill.**





## DR. LAURENCE DAVIS WINS THE PSAI TEACHING AND LEARNING PRIZE FOR 2025



The annual conference of the Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI) was held in Galway from 17-19 October. At the conference, UCC's **Dr. Laurence Davis** was announced as the Teaching and Learning prize winner for 2025. This annual award aims to recognise those whose disciplinary teaching incites intellectual curiosity in students, inspires departmental colleagues, increases student awareness of the significant relationships between politics as theory and politics as practice, and integrates teaching and research. Congratulations, Laurence! The Department of Government and Politics has a long history of success with this prize; the inaugural winner was **Dr. Fiona Buckley** in 2010.





The Department of Government and Politics had a strong presence at the PSAI Annual Conference in Galway, presenting the following research papers: -

- **Fiona Buckley** (Government and Politics, UCC) and **Yvonne Galligan** (TU Dublin), ‘The 2024 General Election – a gender analysis’.
- **Tobias Heyduk** (Government and Politics, UCC) ‘Administrative capacity as infrastructure: assessing the influence of cross-border integration on cross-border public service provision in European border regions’.
- **Theresa Reidy** (Government and Politics, UCC) ‘Why is voter turnout in decline?’
- **Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan** (Government and Politics, UCC) ‘Powerful Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge and Active Citizenship: An Ethnographic Account of European Citizenship Education in Ireland at Primary Level’.
- **Niall Duggan** (Government and Politics, UCC), **Jörn-Carsten Gottwald** (Institute of East Asian Politics, Ruhr-Universität Bochum), **Kim Vender** (Centre for EU-Asia Connectivity-CEAC, Ruhr-Universität Bochum), ‘The Future of Climate Finance in Sino-EU relations in the age of Climate Change Push Back’.
- **Philip Murphy** (Government and Politics, UCC) **Convicts and Advocates: The Interplay of Institutional and Individual Factors on Socio-political Teaching at Post-Primary Level in the Republic of Ireland.**

In addition, staff took part in a series of roundtable discussions: -

- **Professor Theresa Reidy** - discussion on the 2025 Presidential election.
- **Professor Andrew Cottey and Dr. Niall Duggan** - discussion on global security in times of regional instability.
- **Dr. Fiona Buckley** – discussion on political violence on the island of Ireland.

Former Head of Department, **Dr. Mary C. Murphy** (now Boston College) was also at the conference and she presented a paper entitled ‘Mobilising Internationally for National Constitutional Change: Irish Activism in the US’.

# Philip Monahan Lecture



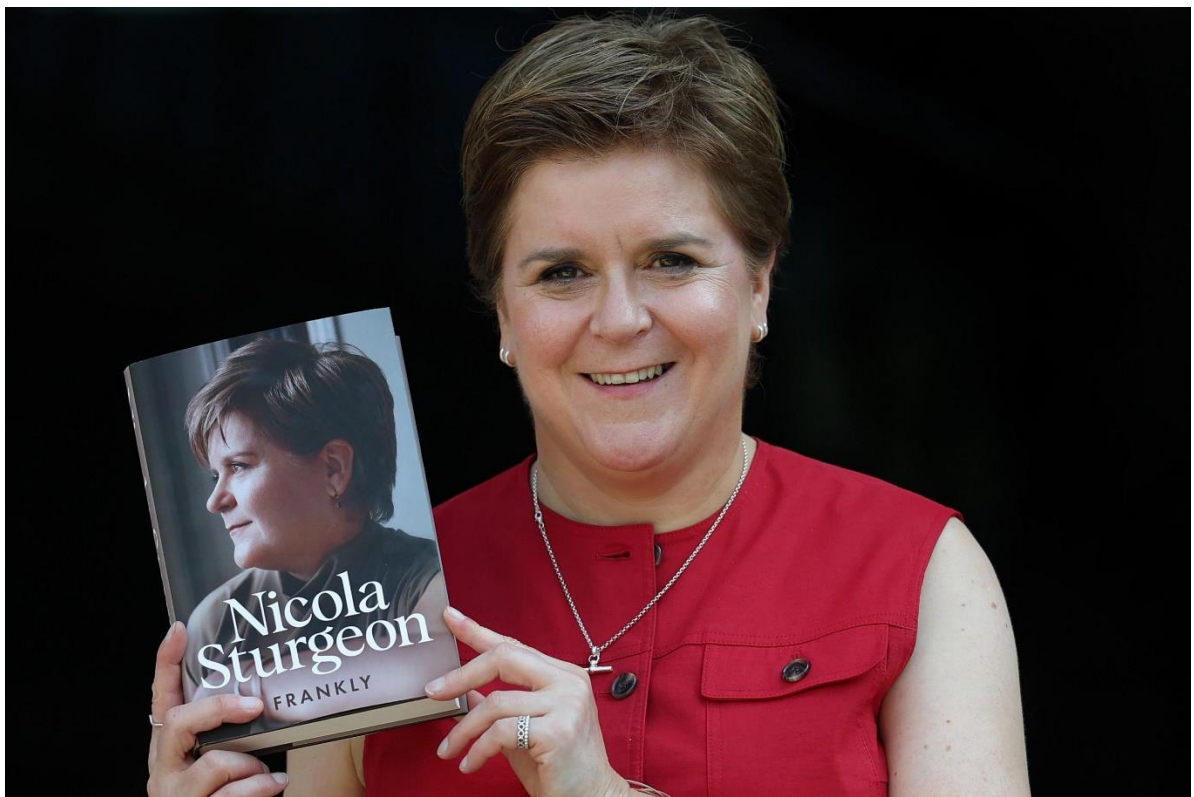
Each academic year the Department of Government and Politics at University College Cork hosts a prestigious public lecture to celebrate the memory of Philip Monahan. Monahan was Ireland's first local authority manager, and he served as City Commissioner and then City Manager in Cork from 1924-1959. Monahan set the highest standards of probity and integrity in public administration, and he defined the role of City Manager and the practice of public management in Ireland. The lecture series was inaugurated in 1997 and, as can be seen from the list below, has attracted some very distinguished speakers.

1. **Professor Tom Garvin**, Department of Politics, University College Dublin (1997/1998)
2. **Dr. John Hume**, Nobel Peace Prize Winner (1998/1999)
3. **Francesco Rutelli**, Mayor of Rome (1999/2000)
4. **John Dennehy**, Secretary General, Department of Education and Science (2000/2001)
5. **Professor Robert Putnam**, Professor of Public Policy, Harvard University (2002/2003)
6. **Dr. Mary McAleese**, President of Ireland (2003/2004)
7. **David Begg**, General Secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (2005/2006)
8. **David Norris**, member of Seanad Éireann (2006/2007)
9. **Robert Faucher**, Deputy US Ambassador to Ireland (2007/2008)
10. **Dermot McCarthy**, Secretary General to the Irish Government (2008/2009)
11. **Ivana Bacik**, member of Seanad Éireann (2009/2010)
12. **Charlie Bird**, RTÉ broadcaster (2010/2011)
13. **Emily O'Reilly**, Ombudsman and Information Commissioner (2011/2012)
14. **John Bercow MP**, Speaker of House of Commons (2012/2013)
15. **Enda Kenny TD**, Taoiseach (2013/2014)
16. **Professor Brigid Laffan**, Schuman Centre, EUI (2014/2015)
17. **Colm O'Gorman**, Amnesty International Ireland (2015/2016)
18. **Vice Admiral Mark Mellett**, Chief of Staff, Defence Forces (2016/2017)
19. **Carol Monaghan MP**, Scottish National Party (2017/2018)
20. **Professor Fiona Mackay**, University of Edinburgh (2018/2019)
21. **Fr. Peter McVerry**, Peter McVerry Trust (2019/2020)
22. **Brian O'Donovan**, RTÉ Washington Correspondent (2020/2021)
23. **Professor David Runciman**, University of Cambridge (2022/2023)
24. **Máiréad McGuinness**, European Union Commissioner (2023/2024)
25. **John Moran**, Directly Elected Mayor of Limerick (2024/2025)

# WHO IS NICOLA STURGEON?

Nicola Sturgeon is the MSP for Glasgow Southside constituency, and the former First Minister of Scotland – the longest-serving and first woman First Minister. Nicola was born in Irvine in 1970. She joined the SNP at the age of 16 and has been campaigning for Scottish independence ever since. Before she became an MSP, Nicola worked as a solicitor at Drumchapel Law Centre, helping people with legal problems.

Nicola was elected as an MSP representing the city of Glasgow in 1999 and was re-elected as a Glasgow MSP in 2003. In 2007 Nicola won the Glasgow Govan constituency from Labour. Following a review of Scottish Parliament constituency boundaries in 2010, the Govan constituency was abolished. Nicola stood as the SNP candidate for Glasgow Southside, which took in most of her former Govan constituency. She was elected with 54 per cent of the vote. She was elected as First Minister on 19 November 2014, and resigned in March 2023.



**Nicola Sturgeon was Scotland's fifth leader — and first woman leader — since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and government in 1999.**

**Nicola Sturgeon will deliver the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Philip Monahan Memorial Lecture on Monday 9 March at 12:00 noon in the Aula Maxima, UCC.**





<https://www.ucc.ie/en/hub-in-active-european-citizenship/>

## **SCHOOL QUIZ TO RAISE AWARENESS OF IRELAND'S UPCOMING PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU**

On 24 November, the Hub ran a school's quiz day to raise awareness of Ireland's upcoming presidency of the Council of the EU. The event was supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs 'Communicating Europe' Initiative and Cork City Council. 152 primary school pupils and 128 secondary school students engaged took part in an epic EU Quiz. Councillor Dan Boyle, former Lord Mayor of Cork, discussed his European experience and presented the prizes to the quiz winners.





## FANTASTIC ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP DAY AT UCC

The Hub in Active European Citizenship, in partnership with the Electoral Commission, held a full day of active citizenship activities on 2 December in UCC. It was a cross-educational level day with 92 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class students from Kilmurry National School, St Maries of the Isle National School and North Monastery Primary School, 13 Transition Year students from St. Aloysius School and six Third-Level students.

The students worked together during the day over the following:

1. A mock Presidential election to understand how PR-STV works. Four university students and one 6<sup>th</sup> year stood as candidates for the following parties: the Climate Change Party, the Healthcare Party, the Housing Party, the Irexit Party and the School Needs Party. **Aoibhe Cubie (below, right)** – Head Girl from St. Aloysius School, representing the School Needs Party- emerged victorious in a landslide vote!



Staff from the Electoral Commission explained PRSTV and oversaw the election process.



2. A simulation of a General Affairs Council meeting presided by Ireland where the students negotiated key priorities for the EU.



3. An EU-themed Treasure Hunt around the campus, including the Quad, the President's gardens and the Glucksman.
4. A workshop on dis/misinformation on national and European matters.



**The EU-themed Treasure Hunt was a very popular part of the day.**



# LAUNCH OF *KEY TO THE EU*



Building on eight years of researching and delivering *My Big Friendly Guide to the European Union*, the Hub in Active European Citizenship has reworked its primary level teaching and learning programme in active European citizenship for 5 to 12 year-olds. In the run up to Ireland's presidency of the Council of the European Union from 1 July 2026, the Hub is launching its rebranded programme called *Key to the European Union*.

To mark the occasion, the Hub is organising two launches, one in Cork and one in Dublin. On 19 February, from 6.30pm to 8pm, **Cynthia ní Mhurchú MEP** will officially launch the programme in UCC. On 5 March, from 3.30pm to 5pm, **Barry Andrews MEP** and **Barry Ward TD**, Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on European Union Affairs, will jointly launch the programme from the European Public Space in the Europe House in Dublin. On both occasions, 60 primary school teachers will be invited and will receive tailor-made resources to support them in including active European citizenship education in their daily teaching.



## **DATES FOR DIARY!**

**Thursday 19 February – Cork launch in UCC.**

**Thursday 5 March – Dublin launch in Europe House.**



Robyn Murphy (BSc Government and Political Science, Year 3) was selected for the U21 Women's Hockey World Cup, which took place in Santiago, Chile, from 1-13 December. Robyn and the Irish squad performed well as Ireland finished 13<sup>th</sup> place out of 24 countries in the final standings. Here, Robyn reflects on her World Cup experience.

'In December, I played my final U21 Hockey tournament representing Ireland at the Junior World Cup in Santiago, Chile. It was a moment that brought a lot of reflection and gratitude as I closed this chapter of my underage international career. Representing my country at this level has been an incredible opportunity—one that has given me lifelong memories, unforgettable experiences, and friendships for life. Competing on the world stage challenged me both on and off the pitch, and I'm proud of everything I achieved and what we as a group achieved together.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the coaches who have supported and guided me throughout the years. Your belief, commitment, and expertise have played a huge role in my development as both an athlete and a person. I am also incredibly grateful to my parents for their unwavering support and belief throughout my underage career, and for the countless 5 a.m. journeys up and down to Dublin! Their encouragement and sacrifices made it all possible.

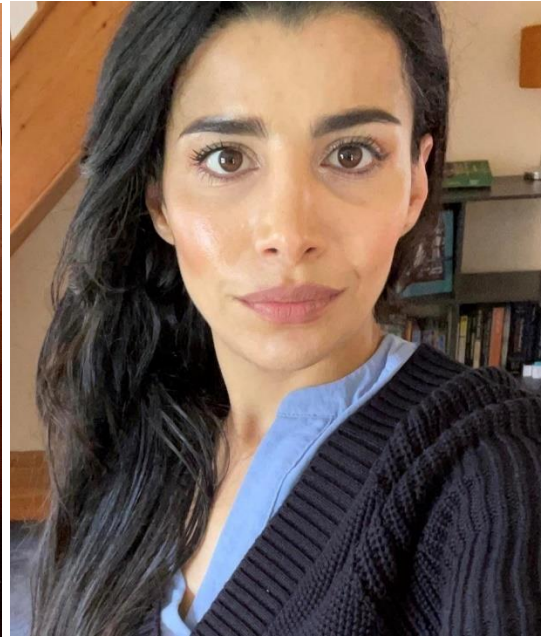
A special thank you to Michele Power, Director of the Quercus Talented Students Programme UCC, and the Department of Government and Politics for their continued support in helping me balance high-performance hockey with my academic commitments. I would also like to thank Christine O Donovan in UCC Sport and Sharon Hutchinson, UCC Hockey Club for their ongoing support. This encouragement has been instrumental in enabling me to pursue excellence in both sport and academia.

This journey has taught me invaluable lessons in resilience, determination, and time management—lessons that I will carry forward into the next chapter. I'm incredibly grateful for the experiences, the people, and the opportunities and I am excited at what comes next both on and off the pitch.'

**Representing my country at this level has been an incredible opportunity—one that has given me lifelong memories, unforgettable experiences, and friendships for life.**

- Currently, Robyn is on work placement in Albany, New York. Five BSc Government and Political Science Third Years have been placed in the New York State Assembly or Legislature as part of the Tom Whalen Internship Programme.

# PhD SUCCESSES



It has been a busy period for the thriving PhD programme in the Department of Government and Politics. On 5 November, **Ricardo Freitas Rodrigues** graduated (left of the picture above, with his father and Prof. Theresa Reidy). Congratulations to Ricardo and his supervisors, Dr. Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan and Prof. Andrew Cottey.

On 4 December, **Rojin Mostafavi** (top right) passed her Viva examination. Rojin received great support on her PhD journey from her supervisor, Dr. Laurence Davis, and her advisors, first, Dr. Clodagh Harris and, latterly, Dr. Niall Duggan.

On 16 December, Claudia Hihetah, passed her Viva examination. Claudia's supervisory team was Dr. Clodagh Harris (Government and Politics), Dr. Niall Dunphy (Engineering and Architecture) and Prof. Brian Ó Gallachóir (MaREI).

2025 was an excellent year for the Department of Government and Politics in terms of PhD awards – congratulations to all.



# WHY ARE WOMEN SUPPORTING TRUMP?

By Dr. Clodagh Harrington

Published in *The Conversation*, Monday 13 October 2025

## THE CONVERSATION

Twenty five per cent of US voters think that the Republican party has a better plan for women's rights than the Democrats, according to new polling. While many liberal female voters are critical about Donald Trump's remarks about women as well as his policies related to women's rights, it's worth noting that between the 2020 and 2024 presidential elections, Trump increased his support among women voters, from 42% to 45%. Making assumptions about female voters as a single voting block is tempting, but there are multiple layers and contradictions within this hugely diverse group. Polling shows that there are a few broad conclusions about their voting patterns. For example, in the modern era, women have higher turnout rates at US elections than men and have consistently been more likely to vote Democrat. So, who are those women voters that Trump appeals to? The short answer is white women, or at least, some of them. With a couple of election exceptions (1964, 1996) white women tend to prefer Republican candidates over Democrats. They maintained this trend with Donald Trump.



Trumpism and the Maga movement doesn't tend to appeal to many college-educated white women. However, religion is a factor. Born-again or Evangelical believers who tend to be committed to the idea of the traditional family where the man goes to work and the woman stays at home and looks after the children have proved essential to Trump's support in 2024. Eight in ten (80%) of voters who identified as Christian cast their ballots for the Trump/Vance ticket, up from 71% in 2020. Women in this group may be more likely to appreciate the Trump administration's attempts to encourage and support women to have more children.

Trump’s proposed “National Medal of Motherhood” would create financial incentives for women to have large families. Women with six or more children may be eligible.

The government has already launched what are known as money accounts for growth and advancement. These saving plans will put a US\$1000 (£742) deposit from the government into an account for babies born between 2024 and 2028, with families able to add up to US\$5,000 annually before the children can access the money at age 18. Around 64% of all American women support a legal right to abortion. However, national access to abortion is only supported by 39% of Republican women over 50, according to one poll, and this is another group that may be supportive on the Trump administration agenda on families, which has included moves to restrict abortion.

The Maga-influenced GOP is not the conservative party of yesteryear, but some aspects of its appeal are not new. Voter priority has long been “the economy, stupid”. And around 24% of women (compared to 17% of men) rank inflation and prices as their most important policy issue. Trump made slashing the price of eggs a major talking point in his recent election campaign, and this will have resonated with women voters worried about the cost of living. Indeed, Trump claimed he won the election on immigration and groceries.



Trump also plans to “fix” the economy and “tariff the hell” out of countries that have “taken advantage” of the US. These policies aim to rebuild US domestic manufacturing. For women in manufacturing communities who have seen the negative impact of globalisation – factory closures, job losses and an undermining of the social fabric – this holds appeal. Those reliant on the local economy for their livelihoods are aware that the survival of this community ecosystem is crucial, not only for those working in industry but for those whose lives are intertwined. Such views are not necessarily Maga-centric, but the movement’s cultural concerns align with these challenges. Trump’s promises to reject globalism and “embrace patriotism” may offer comfort to those whose socio-economic security has been undermined by the trade decisions of his predecessors.

Trump’s political opponents would be well advised to listen to the concerns of conventionally conservative America. Dismissing their anxieties will not dissipate them. Instead, it may encourage more socially traditional women to embrace the some of Trump’s policies. But Trump will also need to worry about the state of the economy, and delivering on his price promises. If he doesn’t deliver, those women who put the cost of living at the top of the list may take their votes elsewhere.



# LAUNCH OF *LEADING THE WAY*

Cork City Hall was the venue for a special occasion on Thursday 11 December – the launch of *Leading the Way*, written by Dr. Aodh Quinlivan (Senior Lecturer, University College Cork), John Ger O’Riordan (retired local government official) and Anne Twomey (Adult Educator with the Cork Education and Training Board). The book profiles 12 inspirational women who have made significant contributions to local government in Cork city - Anna Haslam, Susanne Rouviere Day, Mary MacSwiney, Anne Sutton, Jenny Dowdall, Chrissie Aherne, Deirdre Clune, Catherine Clancy, Mary Shields, Deirdre Forde, Ann Doherty and Valerie O’Sullivan.

In launching the book, Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Fergal Dennehy, noted that the 12 featured women ‘broke new ground, challenged the status quo, and laid the foundations for others to follow.’ He praised the three authors and remarked that Aodh Quinlivan’s record of 11 books in 19 years was an output that few could match. Chief Executive in City Hall, Valerie O’Sullivan, commented that it was a great honour to be included in the publication and she stressed the importance of public service. Rebecca Loughry (Director of Services – Corporate, Community and Cultural Affairs) thanked Cork City Libraries for publishing *Leading the Way* and explained that it would shortly be distributed to schools across the city. The current chair of the City Council Women’s Caucus, Councillor Ciara O’Connor, outlined the ongoing work of the caucus and stated that the group was delighted to be associated with the book.



**Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Fergal Dennehy and Rebecca Loughry (Director of Services – Corporate, Community and Cultural Affairs)**

The three authors then delivered brief speeches, highlighting the support they received along the way from family and friends. They pointed out that from 1900 to 2025 - 125 years - there have only been six women who have served as Lord Mayor in Cork city. There is clearly some distance still to travel before a critical mass of women councillors and senior officials is achieved in local government.

Anne Twomey drew the proceedings to a close by quoting Lil Conlon who, in 1969, wrote a book about Cumann na mBan and the women of Ireland in the period from 1913 to 1925. Her words are equally applicable to the women profiled in *Leading the Way*.



**‘Dauntless spirits stepped forth from the cosy shelter of a peaceful and homely existence to tread the path to which Fate beckoned them ... there was to be no turning back, they had chosen the thorny way which would ultimately envelop their lives, bringing sorrow and often ill-health in its train. They were the heroines of history, unsung, unrecorded, but nonetheless fulfilling a glorious destiny.’**

The six living women featured in the book were present on the night – former Lord Mayors, Deirdre Clune, Catherine Clancy, Mary Shields, and Deirdre Forde, former Chief Executive of Cork City Council, Ann Doherty, and the current Chief Executive, Valerie O’Sullivan.

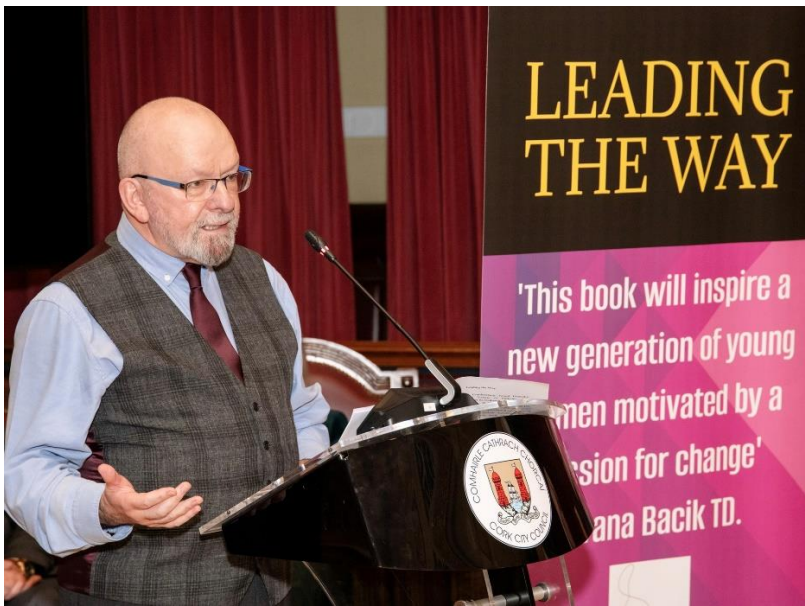
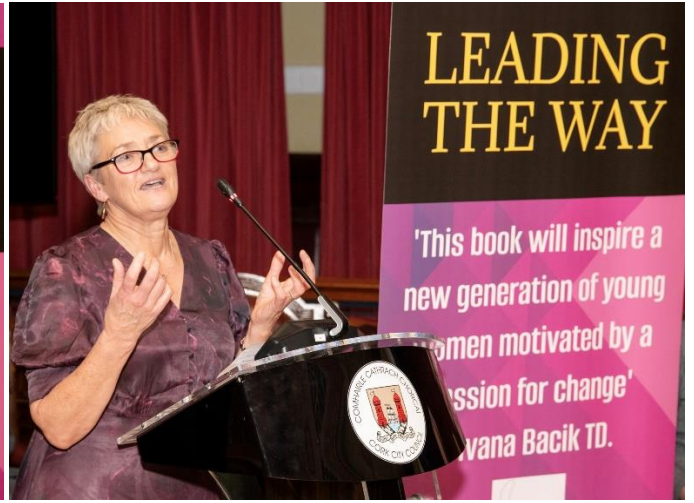
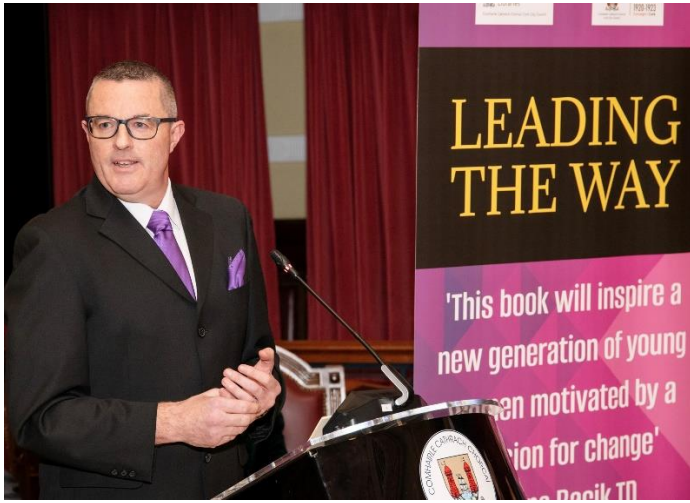


**Back Row (left to right): - Anne Twomey, Ann Doherty, Aodh Quinlivan. Deirdre Clune, Valerie O’Sullivan, Catherine Clancy, John Ger O’Riordan.**

**Front Row (left to right): - Deirdre Forde, Councillor Fergal Dennehy (Lord Mayor), Mary Shields.**



# LAUNCH PICTURES





# RECOGNITION FOR ANNE SUTTON, THE FIRST WOMAN ELECTED TO CORK CORPORATION

22

Cork **INDEPENDENT** TELLING CORK'S STORY FOR 20 YEARS 2005-2025

11.12.25

## The story of Cork's first female city councillor revealed

A new book launched tonight will profile 12 inspirational women who have made significant contributions to local government in Cork city.

'Leading the Way' will be launched tonight in City Hall written by Aodh Quinlivan, John Ger O'Riordan and Anne Twomey.

One of the most interesting women in the book is Anne Sutton, the first woman to be elected to Cork Corporation in January 1920.

Previously a forgotten figure in Cork, many books, journal articles and newspaper pieces incorrectly cite Jenny Dowdall as the first woman elected to Cork Corporation in 1950.

Johanna Sutton was born on Sunday 18 October 1868 in Bellevue, Cobh. Her mother was Ann Lane; her

father was Captain Nathaniel Sutton, a shipmaster based in the town. Nathaniel was a member of a wealthy and well-known family of master mariners.

Anne was a staunch Roman Catholic and Irish nationalist. She joined Sinn Féin and became an active member as the party rose in prominence in the period after the Rising of Easter 1916. Anne put her name forward for the municipal elections to Cork Corporation in January 1920.

156 candidates contested the 56 seats on the corporation, but only one woman was on the ballot paper in Cork city - Anne, a 51 year old spinster living in Eagle Lodge, Summerhill North. Anne was naturally quiet and reserved but she canvassed enthusiastically across her ward.

Counting of votes commenced in City Hall at 9.30am on the morning of 16 January. Results for Anne Sutton's North-East Ward were amongst the last to be announced.

Sinn Féin's Professor William Stockley (493 votes) topped the poll, followed by the Irish nationalist James Daly (343 votes). Having exceeded the quota on the first count, both men were declared elected. Much to her delight - and possibly surprise - Anne Sutton was in fifth place after the first count with 124 votes.

Her more high-profile party colleague Seán French, secured a disappointing 73 first preference votes, placing him 11th after the initial count. Anne Sutton was duly

elected on the second count, following the distribution of William Stockley's surplus.

In her first election, this was a remarkable achievement and Anne was overjoyed.

The annual statutory meeting of Cork Corporation took place on Friday 30 January in City Hall. Alderman Tomás MacCurtain was announced as the Lord Mayor of Cork for the coming 12 months.

Anne's first year as a member of Cork Corporation was turbulent and tragic, with the War of Independence - and the deaths of Lord Mayors MacCurtain and MacSwiney - providing a violent backdrop. Following the subsequent Civil War, Cork Corporation witnessed a



Sketch of Anne Sutton by Jimmy Burns.



Lord Mayor of Cork Seán French in July 1929.

pro-Treaty position. For Anne, acceptance of the Treaty did not mean total satisfaction with its terms, but rather the hope of a better future for Cork.

Disillusioned by the election as Lord Mayor of anti-Treaty Seán French and with her health declining, Anne attended fewer and fewer Corporation meetings over the months that followed. In June, she resigned her seat.

Members paid tribute to her contribution over the previous four years, noting that she was not a speech maker but a highly effective public representative. Anne was also praised for her commitment to culture and her prominent

role on the Fitzgerald's Park and Museum committee. Cork Corporation was disintegrating, and Minister Seamus Burke took the decision to intervene. He ordered the holding of a public inquiry into the workings of the Corporation which led to its dissolution until 1929.

Anne quietly lived out the rest of her days at home in Eagle Lodge, before dying on Sunday 9 February 1930, aged 61.

'Leading the Way' published by Cork City Libraries with the support of the Cork City Council Women's Caucus and Commemorations Programme, will be published in December.

## Local group celebrates 30th anniversary

The Ballyphehane Toghher Arts and Crafts Initiative (BTACI) launched its Lifelines exhibition in Cork City Hall recently, to coincide with international Volunteers Day and the group's 30th anniversary.

The exhibition, which featured images of textile artworks - including knitting and crochet - was created by members over the last 30 years. Jenny Monk, an artist who collaborated on the exhibition, said that working with the group had been a privilege.

"This group teaches us that creativity thrives when shared, and their passion for crochet and community is a lesson in how art can inspire, heal, and connect," she said.

Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr Fergal Dennehy said the group "represents the very best of grassroots voluntarism".

"Their creativity, commitment, and passion for empowering the local community through craft is truly inspiring. They are champions of community spirit and a shining example of how volunteers can



Teresa McCarthy, Community Health Worker Ballyphehane Toghher CDP, with craft makers Bridie Casey, Nancy Falvey, Bernice Jones, Charlotte Meany and Josephine Neff at the opening of the exhibition LifeLine-The Magic of Crochet & Community by the Ballyphehane/Toghher Arts & Craft Initiative in the Atrium, City Hall. PHOTO: DARRAGH KANE

transform lives," he said.

BTACI meet weekly, and Community Health Worker Teresa McCarthy at Ballyphehane Toghher Community Development Project said that the health and wellness benefits of sharing craft skills are evident.

"Their incredible work has enriched our community for three decades, and they continue to be role models in how volunteerism and craft can bring people together," she said.

The group was founded in 1994 with the aim of enhancing the quality of life and skills of people experiencing isolation and social exclusion. They encourage participation in arts and crafts by those who might not otherwise have the opportunity.

BTACI has collaborated with artists across diverse mediums including crochet, embroidery, felting, jewellery making, knitting, patchwork, and weav-

ing. Their projects have involved partnerships with Crawford Art Gallery, MTU Crawford School of Art and Design, local schools and community organisations.

BTACI is supported by Ballyphehane Toghher Community Development Project, Cork City Council Arts Office, and other partners. The exhibition will run in the Anglesea St Atrium of City Hall until 18 December, between 10am-4pm Monday to Friday.

An article by **Dr. Aodh Quinlivan** about Anne Sutton – the first woman elected to Cork Corporation in January 1920 – appeared in the *Cork Independent* on Thursday 11 December.



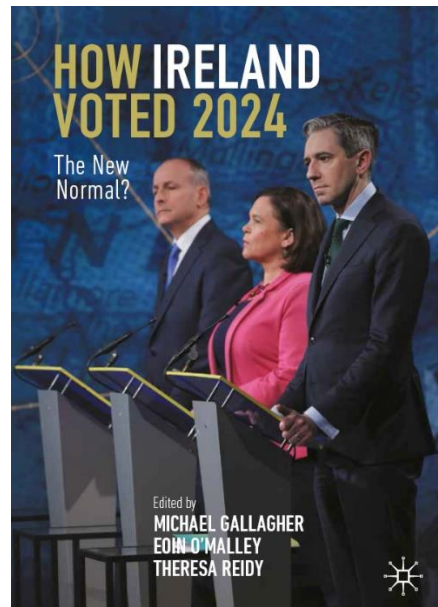
## THE AHERN FILES



# Hugh Ahern interviews Professor Theresa Reidy

**Can you tell us your role and responsibilities?** I am the Head of the School of Society, Politics and Ethics. That's a management role in the college. There are four departments in the school, Government and Politics, Philosophy, Study of Religions and Sociology and Criminology. So, in total there are about 100 staff between academics, administration and research; my role as middle management in that system is to coordinate on things like programme management, research and external engagement.

**Can you give us an idea of an average day?** I'm not sure that I have an average day, if I'm being honest! My days are very varied; some days they're the way it has always been. I come in and I teach, prepare materials, put stuff on Canvas and answer student e-mails. Then other days are more associated with my role as Head of School, so I spend quite a bit of time in university meetings on changes in structures, on internal management matters – for example, at the moment, we're redesigning the BA degree, which is the largest degree in the university.



**How did you end up in UCC?** Initially, as a student - I did a degree in History and Economics. After completing a Master's degree, I was kind of figuring out what I wanted to do, and I decided to come back and do a PhD, and I got a Government of Ireland scholarship. And then I got a job in the Department of Government. I've spent periods of time in Canada and Germany and in France. So, you could say that I have been here a long time, but with periods spent in other universities, especially Concordia University in Montreal and Constance University in Germany

***What made you choose your area of expertise?*** I've always been interested in elections. In terms of wanting to be a political scientist, I trace that back to the 1995 divorce referendum, which I found fascinating. It set me on a path to becoming a political scientist.

***What is the biggest achievement in your professional career to date?*** For me it's very clear - the National Election and Democracy Study (NEDS). Established by Professor Michael Marsh, it was the first proper study of voting behaviour and elections in Ireland from 2002 to 2007. Then we hit the economic crisis and government stopped funding all social science research; there was no interest in election research. For about decade-and-a-half, we struggled to collect data and - over that time - I went from being an early career person to being one of the leaders in that movement. We lobbied (or tormented!) politicians to advocate for funding for political science research in Ireland. Finally, the Electoral Commission was established and funding for election research was written into the law. Out of that came NEDS, which provides annual funding for research on elections and democracy in Ireland. NEDS is an infrastructure project for everyone. I am proud that we have gone from literally nothing to this strong, and European-leading infrastructure on election research – see <https://www.electoralcommission.ie/what-we-do/national-election-and-democracy-study/>.

***How did you end up as one of the country's top political pundits?*** I think a lot of these things are just accidents of being somewhere at the right time and at the right moment! There are fields of politics which tend to give more opportunity for public commentary, especially elections and referendums. Colleagues like Professor Andrew Cottey are called upon regularly to explain what's happening in Ukraine or Gaza. So, there are fields where a greater volume of media requests come in. Your area of research can confer an advantage. After that, it is about answering the phone! The first election I worked on for media was in 2011 and I have just continued from there!

***How do you prepare for media appearances which may be seen or heard by millions of people?*** Elections are like Christmas for people like me! The key is to prepare well, because you need to have all the facts and figures at your fingertips. It depends too on the type of election. The presidential election, for example, effectively only had two candidates which made it easier. It is very different for general elections. Intense preparation is required, and my office is filled with maps of constituencies. I try to understand the design of the constituencies, how many seats are on offer, any boundary changes from the previous election etc. etc. There is no escaping the fact that you must put in a lot of work to prepare for general elections.

***Do you have any tips for students who wish to pursue a career like yours?*** I would advise students to get involved as soon as possible. I was involved in a student newspaper when I was in college. Also, I helped friends with their election campaigns for the Students' Union. I built up that kind of experience – so, for young people, get involved in student radio, student newspapers, podcasting. I have friends working in senior roles in political parties or who are journalists – I met many of them because they were also involved in student radio and newspapers.

***Workwise, what are you reading now?*** I'm reading *The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism* by Martin Wolf. He has a very interesting take on globalisation and the future direction of economies and whether democracy is compatible with globalised economies.

***Outside of work, how do you relax?*** I like to read crime novels, especially all of those that are set on Barrack Street! I am also watching the thriller series, *Slow Horses*, based on the books by Mick Herron.

**\*See article on the next two pages by Professor Thereas Reidy –  
'Three reasons for the brutality of presidential elections.'**

# THREE REASONS FOR THE BRUTALITY OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By Professor Theresa Reidy

Published in the *Irish Examiner*, Saturday 11 October 2025

Presidential elections are tests of human endurance and discipline. Uniquely in the Irish electoral landscape, candidates are subjected to the most intense and invasive scrutiny of every aspect of their lives. There are three reasons for this.

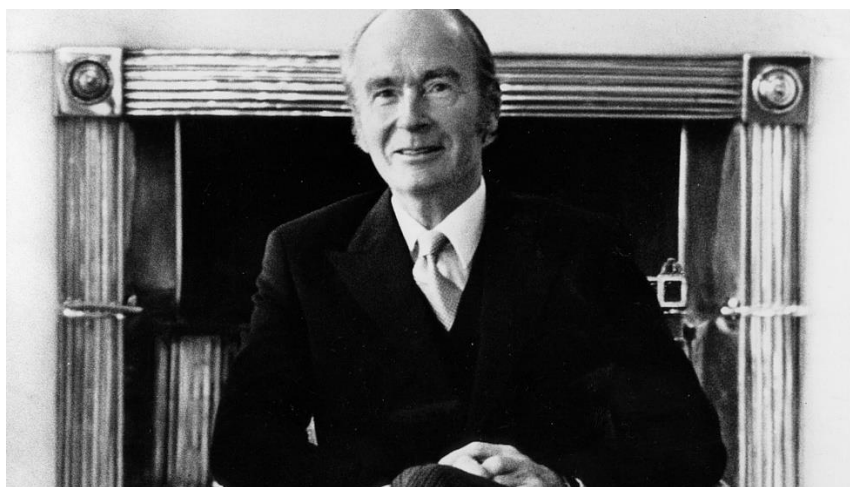
**Trust in the president:** - First, the role of the president is curiously varied while at the same time quite limited. Most of the president's time is spent honouring citizens and communities, receiving ambassadors, welcoming visiting political dignitaries, connecting with the Irish abroad and representing the Irish people. Some have described the role as a type of elected monarch. And so, voters want a warm person, who is comfortable in conversation with everyone, and who is welcoming, dignified and distinguished. The President of Ireland does not have a policy role. They cannot change the national budget, build more houses, hire more teachers and nurses, or change the State's foreign policy in any way. The presidency is a constitutional position with a small number of important formal roles. The president appoints the Taoiseach, government ministers, judges and some other State office holders. These appointments are ceremonial, the president doesn't choose the people, s/he formally appoints them following their nomination by others. The president summons and dissolves the Dáil on the advice of the Taoiseach at the end of a term, and after each general election. The president may also convene a meeting of the Dáil and Seanad, following consultation with their Council of State (advisory body which includes presidential appointments) but the message they convey in any address to this meeting must be agreed by the government of the day.



There are areas where a president can make political decisions. The president has “absolute discretion” to refuse to dissolve the Dáil on the advice of a Taoiseach who has lost the support of a majority of the Dáil. A president might do this if they thought another government could be formed without fresh elections. Although the power has never been used, circumstances have arisen during three presidencies when this power was relevant. These were moments of intense political controversy, and especially during the presidencies of Patrick Hillery and Mary Robinson, the contexts were of collapsing governments mired in deep controversy. Perhaps the most important role of the president is to act as guardian of the Constitution.



The president must scrutinise all legislation and sign all bills passed by the Dáil and Seanad once they are satisfied that the bills are compatible with the Constitution. If the president has concerns about the constitutionality of a bill, they must consult with the Council of State before making a decision on whether to refer the bill to the Supreme Court to determine its constitutionality. The power is a constrained one and has been used very sparingly by presidents because once a bill has been referred to the Supreme Court and deemed constitutional, it cannot be challenged further in the courts. The judgement and independence of a president are of incalculable importance in these rare moments when their decision is needed to manage electoral and constitutional matters on behalf of the people of Ireland. This, in part, explains why there is so much focus during the election campaign on the character of the candidates, their personality, their past roles, how they have behaved. Because scrutiny of the past is the best way that the electorate can get a sense of what a person might be like as president. The electorate want to know that they can trust the candidate at those critical junctures when the president is the most important citizen in the State, when their decision to call an election, not call an election or refer a bill to the Supreme Court directly impacts the lives of all citizens.



**Nowhere to hide:** - And so, the campaign is unrelenting on the candidates, their every move and utterance is parsed and analysed. And this is possible because of the second unusual feature of the presidential elections, there are only a small number of candidates, two this time. Candidate numbers peaked in 2011 with seven on the ballot paper. Contrast that to the 686 candidates that contested the general election last November. In a presidential election, there is nowhere to hide, and few other candidates to take the heat.

**A changed media:** - And this brings us to the third point which is that although presidential elections always had an intense and personal character, this feature has amplified and grown over the decades. The media environment has radically altered. Gone are the days of partisan newspapers where a candidate under pressure might get a sympathetic hearing. All media outlets engage in detailed scrutiny of each candidate. There are multiple radio stations, more TV stations than before, more debates, more interviews. The campaign is relentless which is why some candidates can feel like they are under siege from all sides. And the campaign matters. A majority of voters decide who they will vote for during the campaign. Party affiliation is no guarantee of a base level of support. Even close supporters of parties go outside their parties in presidential elections. Moreover in 2025, some parties don't have candidates in the race and so their supporters will have to vote for someone outside the party. The personality, skills, traits and character of the candidates move centre-stage, and the campaign investigates every single aspect of these. It can be grim and gruelling but Irish presidents leaving office have tended to be highly popular with the public, citizens have generally been happy with their choices. The brutality of the election might be an unpleasant but necessary part of that outcome.

# BRUSSELS STUDY TRIP

By Hugh Ahern

Organised by **Dr. Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan**, four students from the Department of Government and Politics and four from European Studies went to Brussels on a study visit to the European Commission and European Parliament from the 17-19 November. The group was briefed on the pressing matters of the day and had the chance to see the workings of these important institutions and to meet with fellow Irish students.

Day one was spent at the European Commission, where we received a series of a policy briefing from Katie Power (Directorate-General for Research and Innovation) about Horizon Europe, the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. Next, David Cullen (Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood) briefed us on the current progress of European enlargement policy and what needs to be done from a policy perspective to ensure the enlargement process continues. We also heard from Kevin Keary on the important matters of trade, economic security, competitiveness, and simplification, and the Commission's work to make Europe a leader in these areas in the current geopolitical climate. Following that, Eileen Coughlan (Directorate-General for Communication) spoke to us about the worrying issue of disinformation within Europe and how the Commission is addressing it. To close, Leo Flynn (Legal Service) informed us about the work of the Legal Service, and the pressing matters it deals with.



The following day, it was over to the European Parliament to meet Michael Scanlon and hear how the European Parliament works. We also met with a selection of Irish MEPs: Regina Doherty, Lynn Boylan, Cynthia Ní Mhurchú and Aodhán Ó Riordáin. It was great to hear from all the MEPs and discuss the pressing matters within Parliament. That concluded a very busy three days, and we all left Brussels with a lot to think about. We now fully understand and appreciate the work of our representatives and Irish civil servants in Brussels.



# BSc FIRST YEARS ENJOY A BUSY SEMESTER



The BSc Government and Political Science First Year class visited Cork City Hall on Monday 10 November. After an informative conversation with the Lord Mayor, Councillor Fergal Dennehy, the students attended the full council meeting. The next morning, three members of Cork City Council – Terry Shannon, Ciara O'Connor and Honore Kamegni – came to UCC and addressed students in the GV1215 module. On Tuesday 16 December, marking the end of term and the birthday of Brendon Bearss, a reception took place in the ORB.





## **Hugh Ahern interviews Minister John Cummins**

***Can you tell us about your role and main responsibilities?*** As Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, I have a number of delegated functions in both of these areas. Under Planning, I am currently prioritising the implementation of the Planning and Development Act 2024, one of the largest pieces of legislation in the history of the State. One of my proposals which is being finalised is to allow modular-style homes in people's back gardens with limitations, but people will not be required to get planning permission. I see this as a practical measure that will provide housing options for people. We have also made and are making changes to planning laws to speed up the delivery of home and cut unnecessary regulatory burden. In local government, I have established a Local Democracy Taskforce which is currently working on recommendations to strengthen the autonomy of councillors. I was delighted to speak to many of you about this at the 10<sup>th</sup> CLRG Public Lecture Series

***What does an average day look like for you?*** Every day is different! On Mondays I work in Waterford and with my team in my constituency offices in both Dungarvan and Waterford city. Tuesday to Thursday I am in Dublin and my days consist of taking pieces of legislation through the Houses of Oireachtas, meetings with my officials in the Department to progress work, attending Cabinet committee meetings on housing, and I typically will do some radio or TV interviews. On Fridays I am either in Waterford meeting my constituents or travelling around the country visiting the senior Executive team in local authorities to discuss how they are accelerating supply and tackling vacancy in dereliction in towns and villages.



***What first drew you into the political world?*** My father and family were always very involved in the community. My father, Maurice, really inspired me to get into politics, he was a councillor and Senator so I saw first-hand the positive impact you can have on your community. From a very young age, I had a desire to help people with their everyday challenges and make a meaningful difference in their lives. I wanted to be someone who could influence decision-making on a whole range of issues impacting my constituents in Waterford.

***What was it like to be elected for the first time?*** I was first elected to the council in 2009 and was a councillor for 11 years and Mayor on two occasions before being elected to Seanad Éireann in 2020 and then as a TD in 2024, so I've been through a few elections. The feeling is a very humbling one, to know that so many people got up and went out to vote for you is something that gives me great pride but also motivates me every day to work hard for the people of Waterford.

***Can you give us an insight into the role you played during the Programme for Government talks?*** It was an honour to be asked by the Tánaiste and the leader of Fine Gael, Simon Harris, to be part of the team that would lead the talks in forming a Programme for Government. We held long meetings on either side of Christmas last year with Fianna Fáil and debated and worked together on finalising policies that would shape how this Government will change the country for the better for the next number of years.

***What are you reading, listening to, or watching at the moment?*** I wish I had more time to read. My wife, Inga, reads two to three books a week. When I do get some time, I like to watch sport, and I have recently watched *Special Ops: Lioness* on Netflix.



***How do you like to relax when you have some free time?*** I enjoy going on walks with my wife; it's really important to try get some form of exercise to clear your head. We're really lucky in Waterford that we've some of the best walking trails in Europe and I take full advantage of that when I have some free time.

***As a Minister, you're under significant pressure — how do you manage your workload and maintain balance?*** It can be very difficult, politics is all-consuming. I am fortunate I have a hard-working and supportive team around me. The days are long but rewarding. I try to keep most Sundays free to switch off.

***What advice would you give to someone who wants to enter political office or work in politics?*** To do it! The first step in anything is sometimes the hardest, politics can be very tough and challenging at times, but it is also just as rewarding. Helping people and seeing progress is a real joy, it's worth the tough days so go out and get involved.

***Is there one thing that you would like to do in your term in office?*** In my current role, I want to cut red tape and simplify the planning process. I have always said that planning should build communities; not obstruct the creation of new communities; or the further development of existing ones. I believe my plans to allow modular-style homes in people's back gardens without the need for planning permission is a common sense and practical housing option for people. There will be limitations and it will not be appropriate in every setting, but I know this is an option that will be life-changing for many.

# FRANCE'S POLITICAL CRISIS HAS REACHED A NEW PEAK

By Dr. Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan

Published in the *Irish Examiner*, Tuesday 7 October 2025

Even though the crossroad metaphor is often used, France finds itself at a dead end, with a political landscape more fragmented than at any point in the Fifth Republic's history. The recently appointed prime minister Sebastien Lecornu resigned on Monday, just hours after appointing his new cabinet on Sunday, after allies and foes alike threatened to topple his government. The return of Macron's old ally Bruno LeMaire was the straw that broke the camel's back, observers believe. The resignation represents a major new development in the ongoing French political crisis, with an immediate drop in French stocks and in the euro. The fragmentation in French political life has fostered a latent climate of social tension on the streets, ready to erupt at the slightest spark. Both in turn have generated economic anxiety among investors and financial markets while France's debt has reached 114% of GDP with a phenomenal acceleration in the last three years. How have we got to this point? There are three main reasons which can explain how France has got to here.



**A fragmented parliament:** - The National Assembly was dissolved in June 2024, but we should go back to 2022 to understand better the build-up of frustration and anger among French voters. When president Macron was re-elected in April 2022, he presumed that French voters would give him a majority in the legislative elections two months later. This was not the case. He found himself in a tricky political situation with his party gaining only 246 seats when the overall majority is at 289. The political warning signs, after 18 months of yellow vest protests, were all there. The far-right party, the Rassemblement National, saw its seats go from eight to 89. The socialists, greens and extreme left coalesced into one political group for the sake of the elections and increased their seats from 47 to 155. This led to two years of a minority government which was constantly muzzling the parliament by using a constitutional article allowing for key pieces of legislation like the budget to be passed without debate. The National Assembly turned into a pressure cooker. The lessons of those two years and the debacle of the European elections for Macron's party led him to believe that giving a voice back to the people through anticipated legislative elections would be a good idea to "clarify the situation". This resulted in a National Assembly even more fragmented into three equally divided blocs: The left, greens and extreme left with 182 seats; Ensemble (Macron's party) with 168 seats; the far-right with 143 seats.



Rather than ask the largest party on the left to form a government, Macron decided to look to the right and has appointed three prime ministers who are all considered more or less supportive of his policies. The RN's goodwill or otherwise towards the government has decided so far what is adopted in the National Assembly and what is not.

**Voter frustrations:** - The second reason for France's situation comes from the frustration felt by French voters. There are two main causes that come back time after time in polls to explain the level of anger among French voters: the sentiment of utter social and fiscal inequality and injustice, that the rich are getting richer and the rest are getting poorer; the feeling that their voice is not heard. No matter what they vote or what they express, people in charge of the country will not listen. France was ranked 1st out of 38 OECD countries in terms of the tax-to-GDP ratio in 2023 with 43.8%. Yet the quality of essential public services like hospitals, schools or the police is steadily declining as international rankings like PISA demonstrate. The protests organised on September 10 and 18, the former by extreme left grassroot organisations and the latter by trade unions, have been successful without being tidal waves and bringing the country to a halt. These protests led to prime minister Lecornu, as he was until Monday, to row back on symbolic budgetary measures like budgetary savings of €44bn in the 2026 budget or the scrapping of two bank holidays. Despite the utter exhaustion of French citizens with their political and corporatist representatives, it remains uncertain whether the social situation is on the brink of conflagration or appeasement.



**France's public debt:** - Finally, France's financial situation has reached a head with a level of public debt which has dramatically increased in the last three years. Without considering the increase in GDP, French debt has gone up by €1trn in three years. What was manageable at a time of low interest rates is becoming unsustainable with increasing interest rates and public spending. The reason for the last two governments' resignation has been the budget and the severity of the cuts involved. Lecornu appeared to be a much more conciliatory operator than his predecessors and resigned after controversy around appointment of his cabinet. However, the budgetary tight rope exercise that his replacement will have to engage with involves wooing the socialists with increased taxation of the ultra-wealthy while not losing any support on the right and extreme right. This would be close to a miracle in a country that has no culture of grand coalitions and where political parties remain firmly ideologically defined. This financial and fiscal uncertainty also has an economic impact with companies freezing investment and hirings until they have a clearer picture now that the American tariffs have been agreed.

### 'Sick man' of Europe: -

France's political, social, financial, and economic situation has not been this uncertain and volatile in decades. France operates a semi-presidential system where there is a balance between presidential and parliamentary powers. The government is accountable to the parliament and can be censured by it. There is a dual executive with both the president and the prime minister holding executive powers. Now, after completing the biggest political heist of the Fifth Republic, Macron must find a new prime minister. A tough ask — but even that will leave him with just 18 months to make sure that his legacy is not about France's economic bankruptcy and political instability, making it the new 'sick man' of Europe.

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## **'INSIDE IRISH POLITICS' DEBATE WITH ENDA BRADY**



The award-winning journalist, Enda Brady, visited Cork in October and recorded a show for TRT World about Irish Politics and current affairs. The show was presented from SuperValu Páirc Uí Chaoimh and **Dr. Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan** took part. She was joined by the former Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Dan Boyle, the *Irish Examiner* journalist, Liz Dunphy.

Both Dan and Liz are graduates of the Department of Government and Politics at UCC!



# Conferences, Seminars and Guest Speakers

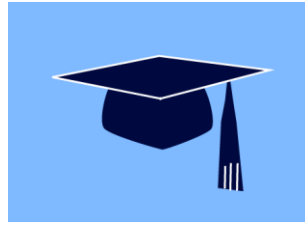


At the invitation of **Dr. Clodagh Harris**, the renowned academic, Professor Rebecca Willis (Energy and Climate Governance, Lancaster University) came to UCC on Monday 10 November to deliver a guest lecture entitled 'A Social Contract for the Climate Crisis.' Professor Willis argued that people's trust in government and democratic processes is low, and yet the need for urgent action on climate has never been greater. What does this mean for climate governance? Professor Willis presented findings from her research with citizens, and with politicians, showing that there is more common ground than many think, but that we have the urgent task of putting citizens front and centre of climate strategies.

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**Dr. Aodh Quinlivan** delivered a public lecture in Wexford County Council on 25 November. His talk, entitled 'Barriers and Breakthroughs', explored the representation of women in Irish local government from 1898 to the present day. Aodh also launched the 'Plucky Women' exhibition on behalf of the Wexford County Archives. The picture above shows Aodh with (from left to right) the Wexford County Archivist, Gráinne Doran, and former members of Wexford County Council, Kathleen Codd Nolan, Helen Corish Wylde, and Avril Doyle.



# GRADUATE PROFILES



**Michelle Healy** graduated with a BSc Government and Public Policy degree in 2005. She then undertook an LLM in Queen's University Belfast. She has had a varied career, working as: a Programme Manager for the United Nations in Congo; the Head of Grants and Communications for the Danish Refugee Council; and as the Project Manager for the Hub at UCC. She currently is the Funder Liaison and Design Co-Ordinator for Pobal. Pobal works on behalf of the Irish Government, and in conjunction with communities and local agencies, to support social inclusion and local and community development. Michelle's role supports building and leading relations with the organisation's funders, and for managing business development processes for social inclusion programming across Ireland.



**Conor Culkin** graduated with a BSc Government and Public Policy degree in 2008 and then received an MA in Broadcast Journalism from the University of London. After that, he worked in the British and Irish media, covering some of the biggest stories in news and sport. He has worked for BBC Radio 5 Live, RTÉ Lyric FM, Newstalk, 96FM, C103, Red FM, Cork's *Evening Echo*, *The Irish Independent*, *The Irish Examiner* and *The Waterford News and Star*. Conor then embarked on a career move and joined the communications team of Phil Prendergast MEP for the 2014 European Parliament elections. He worked as the Communications Officer for Epilepsy Ireland from 2016 to 2019, before moving to Focus Ireland as its Communications Officer.





# GRADUATE PROFILES



**Áine O'Connell** graduated with a BSc Government and Public Policy degree in 2006. She followed this with a variety of further qualifications in organisational behaviour and leadership. She spent nine years working in Zurich for Swiss Re, before returning to Ireland as a Director (Government and Public Policy Advisory) for PwC. In May 2025, she moved to Grant Thornton as a Director (Public Sector Consulting).



**Gregory Loughnane Walsh** graduated with a BSc Government degree in 2010 and then completed the MBS in International Public Policy and Diplomacy at UCC. Following spells as a Purchase Negotiator with Elite Consultancy and as a Recruitment Consultant with Hays, he spent three years a Senior Consultant with Morgan McKinley. For the past five years, he has been the Talent Acquisition Lead with ServiceNow - the AI platform for business transformation – based in Dublin.

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Congratulations to the BSc Government and Political Science class of 2025 which was conferred in November. We look forward to following your careers with great interest.

*Picture: Dr. Aodh Quinlivan, Barromie Fullah and Dearbhail O'Callaghan.*

## Departmental Research Seminar Series

The first Department and Government and Politics research seminar of 2026 will be held on Tuesday 27 January. **Dr. Aodh Quinlivan** will address the topic *'Policy, Power, and Participation: Women's Representation in Irish Local Government'*. This presentation will examine the history of female representation in Irish local government and discuss current trends and policies.

**Tuesday 27 January at 3:00 p.m. in ORB 2.03 – ALL WELCOME!**



In November, **Dr. Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan** was in Kinsale Community School for the launch of the **FÉILTE JEAN MONNET INITIATIVE**. As part of the proceedings, she spoke on a panel about 'The Power of the European Classroom' with EU Commissioner Michael McGrath.



## Government and Politics Society to Honour Mary McAleese



On Friday 27 February, former President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, will be joining us to be honoured as Honorary President of the Government and Politics Society. Professor John O'Halloran will open the event and Dr. Fiona Buckley will facilitate a conversation with Dr. McAleese. A short Q and A session will follow.

The event takes place in Devere Hall at 1:00 p.m. and all are welcome to attend.

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***Government Times is a joint collaboration between students and staff. Therefore we encourage students of the Department of Government and Politics to get actively involved.***

***Please e-mail [a.quinlivan@ucc.ie](mailto:a.quinlivan@ucc.ie) with any ideas you might have.***

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