



CORRECTING CHRISTINE DAVIES

THERE WAS some bad news for the glamorous **Christine Jane Davies**, owner of the sprawling Ballybla House and estate outside Ashford in Co Wicklow and sister of loaded Irish Georgian Society president **David Davies**.

A recent planning decision means Christine will have to find another way to generate “additional sources of income”.

La Davies applied for planning permission to retain an unauthorised two-bedroom house (described by planners as being “out of character” with the existing estate) that was constructed adjacent to Ballybla House itself for use as tourist accommodation. The plan, however, was shot down by the council as it was deemed in breach of the County Development Plan.

Christine duly lobbied in an

appeal, in which the consultants, The Smith Partnership, claimed that she was seeking to “regularise” the cottage, “as constructed on site”.

In support of her appeal, a letter signed by Davies noted: “The events of recent years have highlighted the need for farms such as Ballybla to diversify and find alternative and additional sources of income.”

She described Ballybla as a “fantastic location” for agri-educational activities, due to the “remarkable diversity of habitats for potential guests to study, explore and enjoy”.

There was, however, no reference to the failure to obtain planning permission before erecting the single-storey house. Indeed, council planners had also highlighted “a large collection of farm buildings and other structures near the subject site”, which, they claimed, “do not appear to have the benefit of planning permission... The planning officer is concerned that any permission may lead to the consolidation of unauthorised

development.”

Davies’s appeal was lodged in late 2022 and was initially set to be decided by the end of May last year but well-ventilated controversies at An Bord Pleanála (ABP) resulted in a major backlog. As a result, the decision was well over six months late in being delivered.

The bad news for Christine when it finally arrived is that her appeal was rejected for a variety of reasons, with ABP noting that it was not satisfied that the unauthorised house

is located in an established tourist facility and the retention of the property would be “contrary to proper planning and sustainable development in the area”.

A headache for Davies now is the next step she will have to take, given that there is no planning permission in place for the two-bedroom house and that retention permission has been refused, at a minimum for tourism use. As a result, the owner of Ballybla House could yet be forced to demolish the unauthorised property and end up shelling out a fair few bob rather than

generating any “additional sources of income”.

THE ASSOCIATION of Irish Racehorse Owners (AIRO) has just published its annual report for 2023, showing income of €270,000, the majority of which (€169,000) was made up of members’ subscriptions. Nevertheless, the company, which boasts one employee (Regina Byrne) managed to post a loss of €15,000.

One of the interesting aspects of AIRO’s spending is the moolah lashed out under the heading of ‘Awards Expenses’. This relates to the annual AIRO bash, which last year was held once again at John Magnier’s swanky Cashel Park Hotel.

According to the accounts, that blow-out in Tipperary cost AIRO a handsome €54,000. Recipients of the accolades presented on the night included Swiss-based tax exile JP McManus and fellow moneybags, the Aga Khan, Sue Magnier and Barry Connell.

As was the case last year, the awards themselves were sculpted from wire and resin, and were designed and made by British artist Linda Hoyle, which might disappoint some Irish artists hoping for a juicy commission.



Aerial view of Ballybla farm

EDEN
O N E



EXPERIENCE DUBLIN’S FINEST HEALTH CLUB & SPA



MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES: membership@edenone.ie | 01 215 0640

www.edenone.ie

KILLIAN POYNTON'S HIGH NET WORTH CLIENTS

GREEN BIRD Ltd, a company catering to the needs of so-called "high net worth individuals", has found itself on the end of a judgment from the dreaded Revenue. Established by **Killian Poynton** – who hails from the **Bewley** family – and his Russian wife, it looks like the pandemic scuppered the couple's big plans, although the ink was already red by the time Covid struck.

Certainly, Poynton talked a good game when he discussed Green Bird's *modus operandi* and excess was the theme when Killian was interviewed by former presidential candidate **Seán Gallagher** in Howth Yacht Club for the *Sindo* a few years back.

At the time, Poynton claimed that private clients contacted him from all over the world, notably Europe, the US and Russia. Indeed, he once organised a birthday surprise for "the wife of a wealthy Russian client", which apparently involved renting a famous French stately home (Château le Vicomte) for a weekend and bringing in "a top Michelin chef", as well as flying in the woman's favourite band "all the way from the Maldives to entertain the couple over dinner on a balcony".

This was followed by a

fireworks display "and as a finale to their trip, Killian had thousands of butterflies specially flown in, which were released into the air on the couple's last night".

Obviously, it would require very deep pockets to avail of such extravagant treatment but then money was no object for clients of Green Bird, who included "the king of Saudi Arabia and his entourage", who stayed at the king's palace outside Cannes.

Those exclusive environs would be familiar to Killian, who boasted of having a Green Bird office in the Mediterranean city. He originally moved to France to manage his golf course management company in Cannes, where he met his wife, **Natasha**, and established Green Bird.

This seems to be **Natasha Bespalova**, although the only name that appears on company documents for Green Bird is that of **Natalia Strawbridge**, who is listed as originally sharing an address with Poynton in Les Ardrets, near Grenoble in the

south east of France. At the time Green Bird was set up, Strawbridge was described as a UK citizen, although since a move by her and Killian to a villa in Theoule-Sur-Mer, around 15km from Cannes, the nationality of both directors (and equal shareholders) has been listed as French in Companies Office documents.

Presumably, Natasha's Russian connections have come in handy and

Ruskies previously represented a significant share of Green Bird's business. For example, in his *Sindo* interview, Poynton recalled a "challenge" when he had to find a rare orchid as a present for "the wife of one of his wealthy Russian clients". Happily the intrepid Killian was able to deliver and even managed to have the flower called after the man's wife. Wow!

Poynton also told the *Business Post* in a separate interview that he planned to open offices in New York and Dubai and that his company's success with its demanding, minted clients was down to the fact that "we don't

take no for an answer".

Arranging private jets and yacht charters for the rich and famous sounds pretty glamorous and the two Green Bird directors were able to pay themselves a combined €377,000 in 2019, despite the company losing €216,000 that year. The last accounts filed only cover the year to the end of 2020, which were signed off in December 2021, when the pandemic was still having a significant impact on the high-end travel and hospitality services offered by Killian.

A note in those accounts from auditor **John O'Gorman** states that Green Bird dropped €62,000 in 2020, leaving it with net liabilities of over €1/2m at the end of the year: "These matters indicate the existence of a material uncertainty that casts significant doubt as to whether the company can continue as a going concern."

Moreover, it was stated that "the company has decided to temporarily cease trading".

At that time, the Revenue was owed almost €470,000 and now judgments have been registered against Green Bird by the taxman for a humble €33,000. That wouldn't even get your favourite band flown in from the Maldives.



Killian Poynton

MERRION
VAULTS

Safe Deposit
Box Rental

from
€4
per week

(01) 254 7900 www.merrionvaults.ie

MERRION
GOLD

We Buy & Sell
Gold Bullion

(01) 254 7901 www.merriongold.ie