

# Home News

# 'Best Place to Live' longlist unveiled



CONOR GOODMAN

THE JUDGES of *The Irish Times* "Best Place to Live in Ireland" competition have released an initial longlist of 25 places which are in the running for the overall award. They include five villages, 10 towns of varying sizes, four regional cities, one rural district and five suburbs or urban villages.

The villages are: Ardara, Co Donegal; Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary; Eyeries, Co Cork; Fourmilehouse, Co Roscommon, and Portballintrae, Co Antrim. The towns are: Skerries, Co Dublin; Clonakilty, Co Cork; Killarney, Co Kerry; Westport, Co Mayo; Greystones, Co Wicklow; Birr, Co Offaly; Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim; Abbeyleix, Co Laois, and Athlone, Co Westmeath and Sligo town.

There are five Dublin suburbs: Rathmines, the Glenbeigh Road area in Cabra, Clondalkin, Sandymount and Ranelagh. The four cities are: Cork, Derry, Galway and Waterford. The Dingle peninsula also features on the list of the final 25.

For the Best Place to Live in Ireland competition, *The Irish Times* invited people to nominate the place they lived and explain its appeal.

All kinds of habitats were eligible: a town or city suburb, a village or remote rural spot, a tiny community halfway up a mountain, a street, a road or a housing estate.

From early April until late May, the competition attracted 563 entries from the public, across 32 counties.

The judges are: Dr Maureen Gaffney, adjunct professor of psychology and society at University College Dublin; Paul Keogh, founding partner of Paul Keogh Architects and former president of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland; Gerard O'Neill, chairman of Amárach Research and a co-founder of Hireland.ie; Irish Times environment editor Frank McDonald and *Irish Times* journalist Edel Morgan.

All longlisted places are being visited by a team of researchers before a shortlist is announced on Monday, June 18th. The winner will be announced the following Monday, June 25th.

The winning place will receive a location-appropriate plaque or sign noting the accolade. It will also be profiled in the paper and will be the subject of a short film commissioned by *The Irish Times*. You can read all 563 entries and learn more about about the competition at [irishtimes.com/bestplace](http://irishtimes.com/bestplace).

## THE FINAL 25: WHAT THE RESIDENTS SAID

### VILLAGES

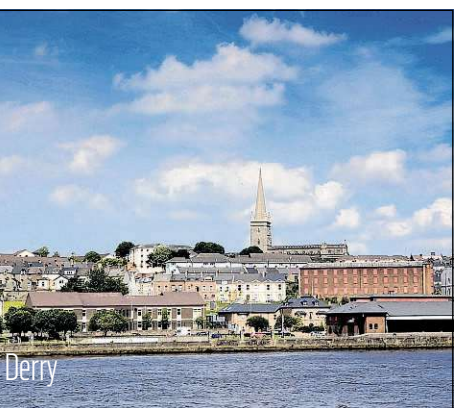
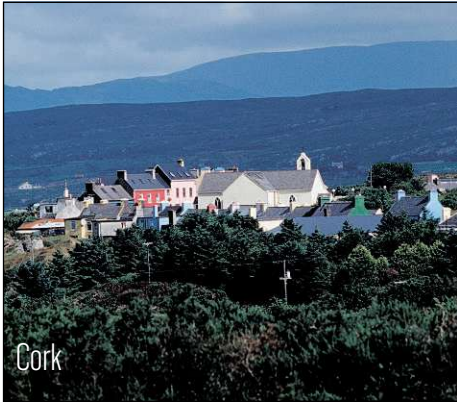
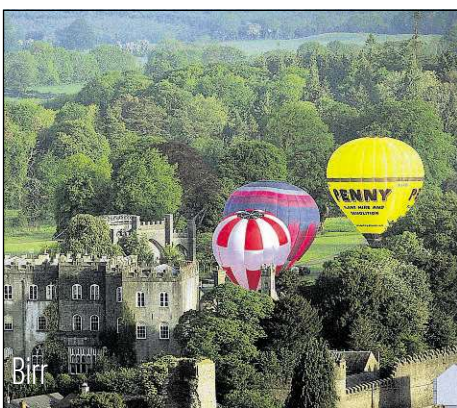
**Ardara, Co Donegal**  
Submitted by *Jenny McHugh*  
"There is surely no better place to live than Ardara, which is probably why generations of other people like myself have chosen to raise our families here, safe in the knowledge that there will always be a smiling face or a helping hand around the corner."

**Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary**  
Submitted by *Katrina Bouchier*  
"I moved to Cloughjordan in November 2010 from Dublin and was immediately taken by the vibrancy and warmth of the community, those who had been born into this north Tipperary oasis, and those who chose it as the location of the dynamic ecovillage. "After visiting in 2006 I thought north Tipperary people were the nicest and friendliest in Ireland. Now I know that they are. Cloughjordan has it all: fantastic countryside, vibrant arts and cultural pursuits and a marvellous community."

**Eyeries, Co Cork**  
Submitted by *Jim Dixon*  
"Traditionally during our summer festival many emigrants and family members return to happily meet together. "Greetings, a drink and news-filled conversations run their noisy eager course until after midnight. Then some "shush-shush" sounds are heard, perhaps a "C'mon Mary" and magically above the now silently anticipating crowd a sweet solo voice gently rises in song. "After applause, another – then another. Half the crowd have a song, the time flies away in hazy delight until 5am daylight creeps along our village street – another great night!"

**Fourmilehouse, Co Roscommon**  
Submitted by *Bernard Kearney*  
"We have a great community spirit and togetherness which is greatly needed in these times... it is the best place for me to be involved in and to spend the rest of my days. Here it may not be blessed with great scenery and spectacular buildings but the feeling of belonging to a committed community is compensation for that."

**Portballintrae, Co Antrim**  
Submitted by *Joyce Rankin*  
"You have views of Islay, Scotland and the Inishowen peninsula. The sunsets are extraordinary. We have three beautiful beaches which offer everything... Portballintrae just gets into your blood and makes everyone a local. "In short, Portballintrae has it all – a quiet, friendly place to live that is extraordinarily beautiful with just



minutes of five beaches, under an hour to Cork city, and surrounded by rolling green hills, it's both near and far enough away from what we would consider 'the Big Smoke' of Cork to nurture its own unique identity."

**Greystones, Co Wicklow**  
Submitted by *Gráinne McLoughlin*  
"... it is a place for all the community, with lots of choices and something for everyone. As one mother said on St. Patrick's Day as all the participants marched along in the parade – 'there is just too much to do in Greystones – I find it very hard choosing the best ones for my kids – they are all GREAT!'"

**Killarney, Co Kerry**  
Submitted by *Amélie Gagné*  
"After more than 10 years spent here now, I know how truly lucky I am to have put my backpack down in this town. The location alone makes it a real jewel. Places like Aghadoe, the Gap of Dunloe, Ladies View and the Black Valley have been attracting visitors for hundreds of years."

**Skerries, Co Dublin**  
Submitted by *Margaret Maloney*  
"There's so much to love... we love it as much in the wild winter storms as in the warm summer sun. We love it at Christmas when starlit trees twinkle along our streets. We love the gorgeous Skerries Mills and pond with swans and ducks. We love Ardillian Castle and gardens, with its fantastic playground for the kids and lots of great spaces for picnics and barbecues, stunning views come as standard!"

**Sligo**  
Submitted by *Catherine O'Donovan*  
"Just walking down the streets of Sligo on a sunny day, meeting and greeting familiar faces, can stir in me an awareness of connectedness that I have never known anywhere else on earth... "It is hard for us natives to be objective as we don't define ourselves merely with Yeats or The Model or with golf in Rosces Point or surfing in Strandhill or Benbulbin or Queen Maeve high on Knocknaree or a rugged coastline (all within shouting distance of the town)."

**Westport, Co Mayo**  
Submitted by *John O'Callaghan*  
"Westport has it all. Lovely people, lots to do, excellent employment, fantastic amenities, gorgeous scenery, a thriving arts and cultural scene, great sports and leisure facilities, a palpable community spirit, a choice of good restaurants, fine schools, a caring social services centre, an active retirement group, flourishing overseas partnerships and more."

**Clonakilty, Co Cork**  
Submitted by *Michael McCarthy*  
"The location of Clonakilty adds a lot to its attraction. Within 10

**Cork**  
Submitted by *Rory Copplestone*

"For me, I enjoy living in Cork because it is a very welcoming and exciting city... Cork is surrounded by many towns and villages, like Kinsale, Cobh and Crosshaven."

"These towns provide great majestic views and stunning scenery either out on the water or on the mainland. These peaceful areas are perfect for water-based activities and places such as Inchodoney, Garretstown and Youghal often reap the benefits of such livelihood."

**Derry**  
Submitted by *Alastair McConnell*  
"It often holds true that one never appreciates the place where they grew up – but not always. There can be moments in which a person sees familiar things around them with fresh eyes. Driving home after picking up a friend from Derry airport allowed me this new perspective a few years ago. "As we drove by the mottled fields and hills of the outskirts, then followed the river, climbing gradually to first outlying houses, and on into the heart of the waterside area of Stroke City, all the while the north Londoner to my left seemed stunned. At each glance of the historic city across the river, through the trees and buildings of the old army barracks to our right, he would comment in wonder; surprised, he later said, that I had never mentioned 'all this.'"

**Galway**  
Submitted by *Pdraic J Fogarty*  
"The interaction of people and place results in some dynamic landscapes in the city, constantly changing and impacting on all of the senses. "The vibrancy of Eyre Square and Shop Street on a sunny day is a tonic for locals and visitors alike. Salthill Prom provides a vista of Galway Bay and the Clare Hills in the background, made famous in song by Bing Crosby."

**Waterford**  
Submitted by *Jenna Keane*  
"Let me begin by making all you non Déise inhabitants jealous. Sunshine weekends in Waterford consist of beach outings, countryside car trips and walks through the sand hills of Tramore. Tourists have been flocking to the sunny southeast for decades now, not only for the sunshine but for the many marvellous attractions. Oh, and it's one of a kind bread... 'The Bla!'"

## 'It will be an interesting journey' to best-place shortlist

IT WAS not easy for those of us on the jury to select a longlist of semi-finalists to compete for Best Place to Live in Ireland, and it's probably going to be even more difficult to decide an overall winner in the end.

We're talking about places as different as chalk and cheese – urban villages such as Ranelagh or Rathmines versus relatively remote picturesque places like Portballintrae, in north Antrim or the Dingle peninsula in west Kerry.

The 563 entries had already been whittled down to 50 based on the quality of the "pitches" made for each place by those who submitted them. We had to weigh whether having a spectacular scenic location or a village prettified with window boxes and hanging baskets was enough to "make the cut" (it

wasn't). There had to be more – a sense of community as well as a sense of place.

Some members of the jury stressed the importance of "sustainability" – such as whether the proverbial corner shop was so far away that residents of a nominated place would have to get into their cars even to buy bread or a carton of milk.

In general, members of the jury felt that there should be a broad range of places chosen for the 25-strong longlist, not just geographically but also in terms of category – cities and towns as well as suburbs or urban villages and rural areas.

We could have argued for hours about the pros and cons, but it came down to a vote, with each jury member ranking his or her favourites in order of choice – and then our votes were

counted, as if it was an election using proportional representation.

Needless to say, the places that came out on top in this exercise are not being revealed at this stage; we thought it fair that the 25 places on the list should be released without prejudice to their relative positions in the jury members' rankings.

These places will now be researched further before we meet again to select a shortlist of up to five, each of which will then be visited by members of the jury to see whether it measures up to the pitch made for it and our initial assessment.

It will be an interesting journey, for us and for them.

FRANK McDONALD  
Environment Editor

enough to do to make you never want to leave."

### SUBURBS

**Glenbeigh Road area, Cabra, Dublin**  
Submitted by *Danielle Clarke*  
"The Glenbeigh area is a snapshot of inner-city life – some of our residents were born in the houses they still live in, there are several generations of some families living here. The inter-generational nature of the sense of community is special."

**Clondalkin, Dublin**  
Submitted by *M Dunne*  
"A village is what you make it to be. Our village is the heart of Clondalkin and the streets are its veins. Our buildings are the bone structure, some old and cracked but have been taken care of, some replaced with new. We have a beautiful park which represents the lungs, a special place where we can breathe freely, exercise and enjoy life with our children."

**Sandymount, Dublin**  
Submitted by *Ria Lawlor*  
"What makes Sandymount truly special though are the people of Sandymount, whether it's a morning greeting or the willingness to chat when meeting on the road. It is refreshing to know this has not been lost, even in the centre of Dublin city!"

**Ranelagh, Dublin**  
Submitted by *Cormac Flood*  
"Take a visit and you will like it; live here and you will love it – and it's still only 10 minutes in the car to Sandymount strand, or 20 minutes to the foothills of Wicklow."

**Rathmines, Dublin**  
Submitted by *Nick Kelly*  
"Rathmines is the closest thing we have to a New York City neighbourhood – fast-moving, ever-evolving, welcoming to newcomers, full of secret comforts for permanent residents."

**Abbeyleix, Co Laois**  
Submitted by *Brian Maher*  
"The midlands of Ireland are amongst our best-kept secrets. The wonderful town of Abbeyleix is the gem of the Midlands. We are the custodians of this fantastic heritage town and we have a responsibility to collaborate as a community to not only protect and promote but also enhance these assets. Abbeyleix has long held a good track-record for community engagement. There is a solid cohort of local people who have worked tirelessly in community initiatives."

**Athlone, Co Westmeath**  
Submitted by *Mary O'Rourke*  
"Emerge from anywhere in

Athlone and within minutes you can be at the water's edge at either the wide Lough Ree or the narrower band of the Shannon as it flows... "In Athlone we back onto the rolling countryside of Westmeath with its rich pastures and fine, fat cattle but across the bridge of Athlone, we face into Roscommon with its lean fields and trimmed sheep."

**Birr, Co Offaly**  
Submitted by *Emma Nee Haslam*  
"Located near the foot of the Slieve Bloom Mountains Birr is a beautiful Georgian town with tree lined malls and a great community spirit... "The community spirit is alive and well with 2012 seeing the 44th annual Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival run voluntarily by a community group for the community. This festival brings family and friends home from abroad (our own "Gathering" each year!) to enjoy over 180 events throughout the festival week."

**Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim**  
Submitted by *Kathleen Coleman*  
"I am bursting with pride when I look at my town Carrick-on-

Shannon and what it has become over the past 10 years... Carrick is a riverside gem inviting passers-by to rest a while. 'Come,' it says, 'you won't be disappointed.'

**Clonakilty, Co Cork**  
Submitted by *Michael McCarthy*  
"The location of Clonakilty adds a lot to its attraction. Within 10

## A SENSE OF PLACE WHAT THE JUDGES LOOKED FOR

**Maureen Gaffney, psychologist**  
"For me, the best place to live is one where you feel you and your family can flourish, where you feel safe and happy, competent and fulfilled, free to be your best self; where you feel you matter and what you do matters; where you belong."

**Paul Keogh, architect**  
"There are two fundamental questions: where are the places that balance a high personal quality of life with the ethics of sustainable living – social, economic and environmental? Second, where are places that combine the attributes people find attractive in suburban and rural

locations – conviviality, identity, safety, continuity and closeness to nature – with those only urban places can provide – convenient access to education, health, leisure, employment and culture?"

**Gerard O'Neill, statistician**  
"People make places just as places make people and even the toughest of places can be softened by the bonds of neighbourliness and community. So I am judging the submissions in terms of what each tells me about the people as well as the place."

**Frank McDonald, journalist**  
"The best place to live is on a street that's designed for people

rather than on a road designed for cars.

"Diversity is also important. An ideal community should contain young, old and those in between; well-off and poorer people, students, foreigners. The place should also bear evidence of being loved and looked after."

**Edel Morgan, journalist**  
"The reason could be the great neighbours, the sense of community, the vibrant social life, the ease with which your children have made friends, the beautiful scenery, the parks and playgrounds, the great local facilities – or something else entirely."

*Who wants to be a Milliner*

with **Brendan Courtney**

**Who Wants to be a Milliner**  
Is a hat design competition running over the summer.

**One Hat One Milliner**  
All details on the "Who Wants to be a Milliner" Facebook page.

**Philip Treacy** will judge the finalist's hats which will go on sale at an exhibition in Arnotts Dublin.

THE HEATS will take place at the following race meetings:

Ballingrobe Races	Co. Mayo	Tuesday 26th June
Curragh	Co. Kildare	Sunday 1st July
Tipperary	Co. Tipperary	Sunday 22nd July

THE FINAL  
BLOSSOM HILL LADIES DAY  
AT THE HORSE SHOW RDS  
Thursday 16th August

Arnotts THE IRISH TIMES HORSE RACING IRELAND goracing.ie

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