

# Home & Design

Saturday, February 24th, 2024 Editor Fiona Reddan. email homeanddesign@irishtimes.com



## Shrubs for the spring garden

A handy little seasonal shortlist of ornamental trees and shrubs  
Gardening, page 4



# Village life at the heart of renovation in Roundstone



**Deirdre Falvey**

Within the Village is an impressive and sensitive refurbishment with five townhouses – village to the front, coast behind

Strolling around Roundstone village, there's little hint from outside the small terrace of three sage-green houses, tucked between two shops, of the impressive refurbishment. A small plaque on the wall beside one of the doors discreetly signals Within the Village.

The houses for many years comprised Connolly's B&B, family home and bar, a place of many good times for locals and visitors to the coastal village in Connemara. The pub was still operating until about 15 years ago. Behind the terrace was another house, some sheds and other buildings.

The houses are in the middle of Roundstone, where 200 years ago Scottish engineer Alexander Nimmo (he of Galway city's eponymous pier) designed the harbour and leased adjoining land for "a tolerable fishing village". More recently, cartographer and writer Tim Robinson lived for decades in Nimmo House near the pier. These days it's a very attractive village, which famously becomes a sort of Dublin 4-on-holidays during the summer.

Long-time friends Lorna Kissane and Maria Murphy came across the For Sale sign on the former Connolly's premises on their way to a swim in Gurteen bay early during the Covid-19 pandemic. Lorna's brother Keith Kissane saw the potential, too, and it was the start of a long adventure for the three Galwegians.

After buying it for €560,000 in September 2020, planning came through in June 2021, and they started renovating in September. Two years later they hosted a local unveiling for Culture Night, in September 2023.

Today Within the Village is an impressive and sensitive refurbishment with five townhouses – village to the front, coast behind. These are characterful, comfortable short-term rentals with high-end finishes and understated luxury, using the work of local artisans and craftspersons, showcasing the area's materials and products.

### Cleverly reconfigured

The original layout has been cleverly reconfigured, so the original terrace and other buildings are now five evocatively named townhouses – Lichen, Bog Cotton, Kelp, Bracken, Sea – of 65-105sq m and from one to three bedrooms, available to rent individually or smartly interlink for a large group (up to 24 adults, or 29 including children). Prices start from €300 per night for the one-bed townhouse, from €400 for the two-bed and from €600 for the three-bed.

Because of its historic layout, each house has distinct character, including the vaulted ceilings of the original pub in Bog Cotton's living room, multiple exposed internal solid stone walls, stunning views over Roundstone Bay, the upstairs sitting rooms of Sea and Kelp, and Bracken's bedroom.



Each house in Within the Village has distinct character and stunning views over Roundstone Bay in line with the project's concept of luxury, serviced accommodation.

The trio work as a team. Keith, experienced in hospitality management and construction, oversaw the work and manages it on the ground. Lorna, with a career in travel and tourism, and who lived abroad for more than 20 years, is across IT and digital marketing. Murphy, with long experience in tourism education and research, advised on the concept.

"Lots of people have great memories of good times in Connolly's," says Murphy. "And we hope to continue extending that Irish welcome and keep the lights on in the building well into the future through this concept of luxury, serviced accommodation."

They didn't have an architect but "a very patient engineer and builders who worked closely with us".

### Favourite places

The aesthetic is both luxurious and natural: exposed stone, woods, beautiful fabrics and textures. Lorna says "internally we chose finishes combining elements of our favourite places to stay in Ireland and overseas, including the extras that make a visit special, predominantly good service, local knowledge and high-quality accommodation with tasteful art and design. What is most important for us now and for all our guests is to invoke the feeling of staying in someone's really nice Irish home with friends."

Keith says "from the outset, sustainability was at the core. We insisted on retaining as much of the original buildings' footprint as possible so as not to interrupt the original townscape of Roundstone village. We used excavated stone to incorporate into the rear and build new boundary walls. We didn't want to knock the buildings, and by removing a lot of the old sheds and clearing the site, and splitting the existing pub, we made five individual houses, each with their own front door, and a nice communal outdoor space for guests but also ideal for small events for the wider community."

continued on page 2

**currys**

Shop our **Go Greener** range & save up to **€200<sup>1</sup>** on your bills.

**Free delivery**

T&Cs apply. Images are for illustration purposes only. 18+ ROI only. <sup>1</sup>Based on YourEko calculations on average saving with tumble dryers as of 11/01/2024 and average tariff 24.77 cent. Saving based on a yearly basis on a 5 cycles per week. Energy saving varies by product. For more details, check www.currys.ie. <sup>2</sup>Free delivery available in store and online on selected large appliances only. Free delivery effective from 31st January to 19th March 2024. For full delivery terms see www.currys.ie.

# Home maintenance: Replacements and repairs you'll face after 5, 10, 20 and 30 years



**Arlene Harris**

To keep your home in check – and prevent everything breaking at once – here's what the experts suggest you do

They say bad luck comes in threes, and this certainly seems true when it comes to items breaking around the house, as no sooner does the washing machine go on the blink, than a curtain rail falls down, or the heating stops working.

But this is all par for the course, and in fact, when it comes to home maintenance, things are more likely to happen in fours and fives, because when a house reaches a certain age, everything seems to go at once.

However, as with all things in life, preparation is key – both to help minimise the damage, and to know what to do when the time comes to replace or repair your household essentials.

David Hegarty of Premier Irish Homes, which has offices in Navan, Galway and Dublin, says that the frequency of servicing for appliances such as heaters and boilers depends on the type, age, usage patterns and manufacturer recommendations.

"As a general guideline, it is recommended to have heating appliances such as boilers and water heaters serviced annually as this helps ensure it is operating efficiently and safely – but always refer to the manufacturer's recommendations for service intervals specific to your appliance," he says.

"In addition to annual servicing, it's a good idea to have a professional inspection if you notice any unusual sounds, odours, or performance issues with your heating appliance. Prompt attention to these issues can help prevent more significant problems and ensure the continued safety and efficiency of the appliance.

**Signs of leaks or corrosion**

"Then in between professional servicing, there are some maintenance tasks – such as changing air filters, keeping vents and exhaust outlets clear of obstruction and checking for signs of leaks or corrosion – which you can perform to help keep your heating appliances in good condition. And if you have gas-powered heating appliances, it's especially important to prioritise safety by having them inspected and serviced by an RGI qualified technician."

Indeed, John Kinsella of JK Home Improvements, says although he and his team are fully equipped to deal with any form of renovation, improvement or repair, homeowners can help keep their property in good shape, by keeping on top of all those odd jobs that we just can't help but put on the long finger.

"It's up to them to keep up maintenance on both the building and the contents by painting and decorating every two to four years, servicing the boiler every year and replacing things like the washing machine every four to six years," he says.

"The lifespan of most doors and windows is 15 to 20 years, while bathrooms should be renovated every seven to eight years. And I would recommend having roof and gutters checked at least once a year to keep bigger problems from happening in the future."

The Dublin-based expert says although your home will still "pop up some



■ **Main:** It is recommended to have a boiler serviced annually to ensure it's running efficiently. **Above:** Gutters should be checked at least once a year to keep bigger problems from happening in the future. **Right:** Karl Bradshaw, of House2Home, says: "[Windows] typically need to be serviced every 15 years and while this is inexpensive, it can have a large impact." PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY/PA; PHOTOGRAPH: ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

surprises" every now and then, it is likely that flooring may cause issues in the first 10 years, even though it might have a 25- to 30-year guarantee.

"This will not last that amount of time and might need sanding and sealing if it is laminate flooring," he says. "Appliances will start breaking down after about five years, depending on servicing and maintenance, and the fridge is normally

the first to go. "After the 20-year mark you will be looking at the cost of replacing the gas boiler/oil boiler/heat pump and the windows and doors will now have to be replaced. Then by 30 years, you are now looking at bigger expenses such as rewiring and replumbing, and probably a new roof overhaul.

"But if you stay on top of some things, you can keep the bigger cost down over time by doing general repairs."

Hegarty agrees and says some of the most common issues that need addressing over time include: plumbing fixtures, heating systems, deteriorating roofing materials, kitchen appliances, electrical systems, windows and doors, flooring, paint and finishes, foundation and structural issues and exterior maintenance.

"These are just a few examples of the types of issues that homeowners may encounter as their homes age," he says. "But regular maintenance, inspections and timely repairs can help mitigate these

issues and keep the home in good condition over the years."

Karl Bradshaw, of House2Home, says that "windows are a great example of this".

"They typically need to be serviced every 15 years and while this is inexpensive, it can have a large impact," he says. "There are also a number of appliances which we would recommend servicing yearly to ensure they are operating at maximum efficiency – heat pumps and gas or oil boilers fall into this category. You should also service thermal panels every 12 months – and once a year you should have the flue of your stove inspected.

"Really, we recommend preventive maintenance. If you service your appliances regularly they will last longer and operate more efficiently over their lifetime – and you should keep a logbook for each appliance detailing services, repairs, new parts, etc. Also, it's worth noting that there are excellent grants available for

upgrading your home energy upgrades administered by the SEAI."

"It's important to note that these are general estimates, and the lifespan of specific components, can vary widely based on factors such as quality, usage and maintenance," he says. "But regular inspections and maintenance can help identify issues early and prolong the lifespan of various systems and components in a home.

"These include, regular cleaning of appliances, replacing filters, checking for leaks, adjusting settings to ensure

## The lifespan of your home

David Hegarty of Premier Irish Homes, which offers a nationwide service, says the lifespan of various components in a home can vary depending on factors such as the quality of materials, level of usage, climate and maintenance. A rough guide is as follows:

### Within 5-10 years:

**Appliances:** Some appliances such as refrigerators, dishwashers and washing machines may start to show signs of wear or require repairs after five to 10 years of use.

**Plumbing fixtures:** Leaking taps, clogged drains and toilet issues may become more common as plumbing fixtures age.

### Around 15-20 years:

**Roofing:** Depending on the type of roofing material and exposure to weather conditions, roofs may start to show signs of wear, such as damaged tiles or leaks, around the 15- to 20-year mark.

**Windows and doors:** Seals around windows and doors may deteriorate over time, leading to drafts, air leaks, or difficulty opening and closing.

### Around 20-30 years:

**Flooring:** Depending on the type of flooring material and level of foot traffic, flooring may begin to show signs of wear or damage and may require repair or replacement.

**Exterior maintenance:** Paint and other exterior components may need to be repaired or replaced after 20-30 years of exposure to the elements.

### 30 years and beyond:

**Structural issues:** While many structural components of a home can last much longer with proper maintenance, issues such as foundation cracks or settlement may become more common after 30 years or more.

“

**Appliances will start breaking down after about five years, depending on servicing and maintenance, and the fridge is normally the first to go**

appliance are set to appropriate temperature and operating modes, inspecting and lubricating moving parts, scheduling professional maintenance and following manufacturer's guidelines.

"By incorporating these maintenance practices into your routine, you can help keep your appliances running smoothly, extend their lifespan, and minimise the likelihood of unexpected breakdowns or repairs," he says. "Additionally, proactive maintenance can improve energy efficiency and reduce utility costs over time.

## Village life at heart of renovation in Roundstone

continued from page 1

Two of the townhouses open direct from the street; the third door leads to the one-bedroom townhouse, access to the courtyard and the other two houses, and the guest relations office for help and advice.

It ultimately cost more than €3.5 million, including purchase, renovation and fitout. All three got involved in the design and choosing materials and interiors, and the result is a combination of their ideas, with bespoke furniture, upcycled materials, antiques and stoves. Towards the end of the project, Galway-based interior designers Studio Panfilo helped tie it together and source furnishings, including leather chairs and kitchen tables of recycled wood.

Where possible, they used local craftsmen and tradesmen, including stone masonry and carpentry. The finished townhouses include Paddy O'Malley of Ballyconnelly's outstanding concrete bathroom countertops (incorporating fossils and shells he finds on local beaches); Joshua Gabriel's bespoke kitchens; and Rosie Johnson at Provenance Interiors in Clifden made curtains and blinds in Irish linen.

Thoughtful attention to detail includes Seamus Laffan's Roundstone Ceramics; Inish Living's sustainable bed linen from wood pulp; Burren Perfumery toiletries; Finline couches; King Coil beds; Sarah Jenkins's turf baskets, and Calendar Coffee from Oughterard, ready to brew. Outside the courtyard is Mark Grehan's Connemara-inspired garden design, with recycled plastic outdoor furniture from Houe, including a large dining table. Aoibheann MacNamara (Ard Bia restaurant and the Tweed Project) sourced local art and craft from Dorothy Cross, Roisin Coyle and Clíodhna Prendergast, and Joe Hogan's beautiful baskets.

"It was a labour of love and took more than a village to pull it all together," Murphy observes.

The result is a striking combination of high-end finish and local materials, marrying an awareness of heritage, sustainability and contemporary craft, while aiming to support local businesses long term.

For guests who want to borrow inspiration, there's a list of the makers and suppliers in situ and on the website.

The project aims for sustainability, both in the materials used and how it operates, and is also inspired by aspects of the Italian



■ From left: Where possible, local craftsmen and tradesmen, including stone masonry and carpentry were used; the finished townhouses include Paddy O'Malley of Ballyconnelly's outstanding concrete bathroom countertops; two of the townhouses open direct from the street.

Albergo Diffuso ("scattered hotel") hospitality concept, developed to revive historic villages and towns off the usual tourist track, by embedding guests in village life, in rooms or apartments with authentic local decor, with one manager and central reception, offering the basic services of a small hotel, and bringing business to the area.

“The result is a striking combination of high-end finish and local materials, marrying an awareness of heritage, sustainability and contemporary craft, while aiming to support local businesses long term

Within the Village is a twist on this, and there's a lovely sense of these houses' past and present coexisting, and of being rooted in its area, in its architecture, and in the muted, natural, luxurious colours and textures of Connemara. Even visiting on a miserable day, the cocoon and the views seem like a retreat, while the village is right outside the door. [withinthevillage.ie](http://withinthevillage.ie)