Bye-Election and Bye-Bye-Twitter/X
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At election time politicians want to maximise their exposure through any medium possible. But recently many have chosen to abandon the X/Twitter platform in response to the release of the Grok app which uses X to produce and distribute modified images without any restrictions leading to large-scale production of child pornography images. With a bye-election coming soon in Galway West, we talked to Green Party candidate Niall Murphy about his social media campaign. As a software engineer with 30 years experience, he also has a view of the tech industry's responsibilities.

On the subject of leaving the X platform he said "For some time the widespread use of bots, the toxic tone of the discourse, and an algorithm that spread more hate than happiness, had made me consider dropping X from the set of social media platforms that I use. I stuck with it mainly because many journalists were active on the platform, so it had value in reaching them. But the criminal activities of the company and users in producing illegal images was a turning point and I have abandoned it. I get it that some politicians have decided to 'stay on the pitch' but it is not for me.

"I use Instagram and TikTok for short posts and videos and Facebook and LinkedIn for long-form text pieces. Bluesky is the platform that most faithfully reproduces what Twitter originally was and is a place where some normal exchanges of ideas can happen and most accounts seem to be real people!

A number of Garda investigations are taking place into images produced by Grok, and there is pressure to change Irish law. Niall commented on the Grok tool and the wider impact of AI: "The nature of cloud computing means that it is hard to say exactly where the computers that generated the images are located, but it is quite possible that many of them were generated in Ireland. Data centres here consume over 20% of the electricity from our grid, and that power is a valuable resource. Data centre demands impact our ability to supply power to new, vital, housing developments. Whatever you might think of funny cat videos, do we really want to use that power to create child porn.

"While the Grok fiasco shone a light on illegal image generation, there are many other AI workloads where we need to regulate. Fake news, election interference, phone scams, and manipulation of financial markets are some of the concerns.

"AI is an inevitable part of our future, but guardrails to prevent its worst abuses are vital. Everything from cars to toys to power tools have safety standards. They have regulation, but big tech does not want to follow the same standards. In the US the Trump administration has no interest in regulating the big tech companies. In Europe the recently proposed "Digital Omnibus" package will reduce the restrictions on AI applications. It is claimed that we need to be competitive, but I object to following Trump's lead in this area. It has broad implications for our online privacy and safety. Similar big tech influences led to the Minister for Communications, Patrick O'Donovan

avoiding apportioning blame to Elon Musk's company last week. If elected I will work to prioritise individual safety over corporate interests when regulating on-line services.

"As I exit the X platform, I will not actually remove my account. It would leave open the hazard that someone else would accidentally or maliciously claim the @niallgalway name and then impersonate me – something that happened when a Catherine Connolly account was impersonated after the presidential election."

Editors Notes:
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Photos of Niall Murphy available at
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/b5dgnq0qp1ev8ho/AADAiN8nplwvZ02Wxgyn-VlKa?dl=0