NEWS

Law firm to Van's ex: have I told you lately that you owe me?

Michelle Morrison faces High Court action with former solicitors over unpaid costs after her six-year battle with neighbours

Colin Coyle

She took the cases to protect her sea view – but Michelle Morrison is now facing a High Court date with her former solicitor over alleged unpaid costs relating to legal actions against her neighbour and local authority.

Morrison, whose former husband is the musician Van Morrison, is being sued by the legal firm Smith Foy, although her new solicitor claims the action is premature as she is "making arrangements to discharge the certified costs".

At a High Court hearing in 2015, it emerged that Smith Foy had stopped acting for Morrison, known as Michelle Rocca in her days as one of Ireland's best-known models, as their relationship had broken down. The court heard that the costs of Morrison's legal actions to that point was €875,000, including fees for expert witnesses.

The solicitor now acting for her, Clark Hill, said these costs had gone to the taxing master, who adjudicates on disputes over fees, and had been "substantially reduced".

Kirby Tarrant, a managing partner with the firm, said his client had not been aware of any High Court action against her until contacted by The Sunday Times. High Court records show a case was filed on Wednesday by Smith Foy.

Morrison, a former Miss Ireland, was left with the full costs of the long-running High Court action against neighbours Conor and Eileen Kavanagh after abandoning the case in 2015 on its fifth day in court. The Kavanaghs sought punitive costs, claiming the court action had been "vexatious" and had made their lives a "living hell", but a judge rejected this.

Morrison terminated the court case, initiated six years previously in 2009, shortly after her ex-husband Van Morrison issued a public statement saying he had "no part" in the legal action, and pointed out he had never lived with her in Kilross House, on Sorrento Road in Dalkey. The musician, in an unusual public statement, added that he and Morrison had been legally separated since September 2013. They divorced in 2018, with Van Morrison describing the separation as "hugely wearying" and "protracted".

> **The Kavanaghs said their enjoyment of their home was 'tarnished' by the 'public falling out' with Morrison**

DAVE BENETT



Former Miss Ireland Michelle Morrison with Van the Man in happier times

The case centred on rebuilding and landscaping works at the Kavanaghs' neighbouring home, Monte Alverno. Morrison, who presented the Eurovision Song Contest with Pat Kenny in 1988, claimed the refurbished house ruined her sea views and affected her and her then husband's privacy. She said Van Morrison wanted to be able to get out of his car and walk to his front door "without feeling he was being overlooked".

The Kavanaghs argued that Morrison had no right in law to a sea view, which they suggested did not actually exist from her property anyway.

An earlier High Court action against Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown council was settled in 2014, five years after being lodged. That case involved a seven-day High Court hearing after which Morrison was granted leave to challenge the council's decision to certify that the works to the Kavanaghs' home were in compliance with their planning permission.



Michelle Morrison 'fell out' with neighbour Kavanagh, above

Speaking about the effects of the case on their lives, the Kavanaghs said their enjoyment of their home in Dalkey had been "utterly tarnished" by the "very public falling out" with Morrison. At the costs hearing, Morrison's solicitor said "life had not been a picnic" for either party.

Morrison, who was previously married to the footballer John Devine, met Van Morrison in 1992, soon after breaking up with Cathal Ryan, a son of Ryanair founder Tony. The musician accompanied her to court every day for a high-profile case in which she alleged her former fiancé Ryan had assaulted her at a party.

The couple have two children, and Morrison appeared on two Van Morrison album covers, *Prima Donna* and *Days Like This*.

@colincoyle

Fans push Netflix to turn the gables on axing of Anne

Pavel Barter

A billboard illustration of the Donegal-born actress Amybeth McNulty has been displayed in New York's Times Square in an effort to persuade Netflix to renew a cancelled series.

McNulty, 18, played the heroine in *Anne with an E*, an adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables*, Lucy Maud Montgomery's 1908 novel. The show was cancelled at the end of last year, prior to the January premiere of its third season.

Fans have raised $10,500 (€9,500) through GoFundMe for an advertising campaign to persuade Netflix to reconsider. For the past two days, illustrations of McNulty have been posted up on West 47th Street and Broadway in Times Square.

More than 145,000 fans have signed a Change.org campaign in favour of renewing the series, which was created by Moira Walley-Beckett, who was a producer and writer on *Breaking Bad*.

Following a four-day billboard campaign in downtown Toronto earlier this month, fans are paying for another billboard to be placed in the Canadian city for a further eight days.



The billboards prominently feature Irish actress McNulty

Lisa Elksnitis, who is organising the fan campaign from Toronto, said McNulty, who was home-schooled in Letterkenny before being chosen from more than 1,800 actresses to play Anne, is crucial to the show's popularity.

"If Amybeth wasn't in the role, the show wouldn't work," said Elksnitis. "She looked the part. Some of the show's monologues are fantastical and imaginative, but she delivers them in a way that makes you root for her."

The Renew Anne with an E fan billboards include buzzwords such as "racism," "feminism" and "gender bias", in a nod to the show's progressive storylines. An LGBT plot was weaved into the second season, while the third season focused on indigenous people.

"We wanted to let non-viewers know that this isn't a typical *Anne of Green Gables* story, " explained Elksnitis. "This is one of the reasons why younger viewers of the show relate to the storylines."

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which co-commissioned *Anne with an E* with Netflix, has said the series was cancelled due to poor viewership numbers in particular demographics.

Some fan campaigns have worked. Netflix revived *Lucifer*, for example, following an outcry after Fox cancelled the show.

In 2019, fans of *The OA*, which starred Irish actor Patrick Gibson, paid for a billboard to be erected in Times Square following Netflix's cancellation of the series, although the show was not renewed.

Walley-Beckett has visited the Toronto billboard site, but stated on Instagram in 2019 that "there is just no way to revive" *Anne with an E*.

McNulty, who recently finished filming *Black Medicine*, a thriller with John Connors and Orla Brady in Belfast, has tweeted her support for the campaign.

"We want to make as much noise as possible and show them how many people care," said Elksnitis. "We are all over the world. This story is not over yet."

Harry and Meghan told 'you can return'

Tim Shipman Political Editor

Senior British royals are drawing up contingency plans to provide the Duke and Duchess of Sussex with a UK safe haven, amid fears media scrutiny in North America could force them to move back across the Atlantic.

Sources close to the royal household say Prince Charles and Prince William have been "reaching out" to Harry and Meghan, who are currently staying on Vancouver Island, to say that if they wanted to return to the UK full-time they could do so without resuming their official royal duties.

Buckingham Palace thrashed out a deal last week that will see the two move to North America, stop using their HRH titles, and surrender UK state funding in exchange for the freedom to seek commercial deals to promote their charitable values.

But royal sources say the pair are under strain and that family members and staff are concerned about the effect the move is having on them. Meghan was ambushed by photographers last week while out walking with the couple's infant son, Archie.

"The palace are worried because they are vulnerable outside the embrace of the family," a source said. "They are making contingency plans in case the Sussexes suddenly turn round and say: 'Can we come back under your wing?' "

Under the terms of the deal, the Sussexes will keep Frogmore Cottage on the Windsor estate as their UK base, but will repay the £2.4m (€2.8m) of taxpayers' money used to renovate the property and will pay for its upkeep. Royal officials think it will be easier to protect them there.

Courtiers are also looking into other bolt-holes for the couple. "They could spend a month at Sandringham; there is also the Prince Charles's house in Wales," a royal source said. Nobody is going to say, no they can't come back."

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