

The background of the entire poster is a deep blue, starry night sky. In the lower half, two hands are shown holding a red telescope. The hand on the left is wearing a dark blue suit sleeve and a white shirt cuff. The hand on the right is holding the telescope's eyepiece, which is a bright yellow. The overall composition suggests themes of vision, exploration, and reaching new heights.

Club Carlow **BUSINESS SUMMIT**

Breaking
the Ceiling

**Friday 6
November 2026**
Woodford Dolmen
Hotel, Carlow.

SPEAKERS

Rachael Blackmore
Joe Schmidt
Gene Murtagh
Caroline Keeling

SUMMIT SCHEDULE

Programme 11am-3pm

Guest Arrival & Registration / Welcome refreshments and check-in

Welcome to Club Carlow – Business Summit

David Walsh – Chair, Club Carlow

Coilín O'Reilly – Chief Executive, Carlow County Council

Starter Served

Fireside Chats – Sporting Excellence
Featuring **Rachael Blackmore** and **Joe Schmidt**

Main Course Served

Auction

Desert Served

Fireside Chat - Business Leadership & Resilience featuring **Gene Murtagh** and **Caroline Keeling**

Closing Remarks - **David Walsh** – Chair, Club Carlow

SUMMIT PARTNERS

Club Carlow

Club Carlow exists because we believe Carlow can achieve more and that together, we can break the ceiling of what is possible. Through fundraising, community engagement and a shared belief in the extraordinary potential of Carlow people, Club Carlow is helping to build a stronger, more ambitious future for Carlow GAA.

At the heart of that vision is the completion of the Centre of Excellence in Fenagh, a transformational facility that will give our players, coaches and communities the environment, resources and opportunity to dream bigger, develop their talent and compete at the highest level. The Centre of Excellence is about more than bricks and mortar. It is about ambition, belief and creating the platform for the next generation of Carlow people to break barriers, fulfil their potential and make their mark.



Carlow County Council – Local Enterprise Office

Carlow County Council is responsible for delivering services, supporting communities, and driving economic, social, and cultural development across County Carlow.

Its Local Enterprise Office operated in partnership with Enterprise Ireland provides a comprehensive suite of supports for start-ups and growing businesses. From advisory services and feasibility grants to training, mentoring, and financial supports, LEO Carlow acts as a first-stop-shop for entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey. Its mission is to help local businesses become stronger, more resilient, and better equipped for sustainable growth.



Empowering Business Resilience

Inspired by the community spirit of the GAA and the strength of Carlow's homegrown business network, we are proud to present the Club Carlow Business Summit delivered by a partnership between Club Carlow and Carlow County Council – Local Enterprise Office.

This dynamic event will take place on Friday, 6 November 2026 at the Woodford Dolmen Hotel, Carlow. It will feature leading voices from both the sporting and business sectors, coming together to explore how collaboration, resilience, and community engagement can drive economic and social progress.

Our goal is to spark meaningful connections between business leaders and the wider Carlow community—fostering a culture of shared growth and local pride.

To Book Your place contact
Club Carlow 085-8098211 or
e-mail: operations.carlow@gaa.ie

SUMMIT MC CIARA DOHERTY

Ciara Doherty returns for her second year as MC of the Club Carlow Business Summit.

One of Ireland's most respected broadcasters and moderators, Ciara brings more than two decades of experience in television, radio and current affairs to the stage. A qualified barrister with a degree in law from UCD, she has built a career at the intersection of journalism, public policy and business, earning a reputation for insightful interviewing and engaging discussion. She is best known for hosting 'The Tonight Show' and co-anchoring 'Ireland AM', where she led conversations on some of the most important political, economic and social issues facing the country.



SUMMIT SPEAKERS – SPORT



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Dream big dreams, set big goals and enjoy the journey.

RACHAEL BLACKMORE

Rachael Blackmore is one of the most influential and pioneering figures in modern horse racing, a trailblazer who has repeatedly broken the ceiling in a sport traditionally dominated by men. She turned professional in 2015, quickly establishing herself among Ireland's leading jump jockeys and, in 2017, became the first woman to win the Irish conditional riders' championship.

In 2021, Rachael broke one of racing's biggest barriers when she became the first female jockey to win the Grand National, riding Minella Times to victory at Aintree. That same year, she became the first woman to be leading jockey at the Cheltenham Festival. She went even further in 2022, becoming the first female jockey to win the prestigious Cheltenham Gold Cup. Her achievements earned her numerous honours, including RTÉ Sports Person of the Year and the BBC World Sport Star of the Year in 2021.

Rachael retired from race riding in May 2025, leaving behind a remarkable legacy, not simply as one of the greatest jockeys of her generation, but as someone who challenged convention, shattered barriers and changed perceptions of what is possible.



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If you can't turn up, work hard and be a good person, you won't be a good player.

JOE SCHMIDT

Joe Schmidt is widely regarded as one of the most successful rugby union coaches of the professional era, a leader whose career has been defined by challenging expectations, raising standards and breaking through ceilings that others believed were impossible to breach.

Schmidt served as head coach of the Irish team from 2013 to 2019. Under his leadership, Ireland won three Six Nations Championships, including a historic Grand Slam, recorded Ireland's first-ever victory over New Zealand, and rose to number one in the World Rugby Rankings for the first time in history.

Those achievements were about more than trophies. Schmidt helped change Ireland's perception of what was possible on the world stage. He took a team that had never beaten New Zealand and delivered that breakthrough. He took Ireland to the top of the world rankings. In doing so, he demonstrated one of the central ideas behind Breaking the Ceiling: sometimes the biggest barrier is not capability, but the belief that something cannot be done. His story is ultimately one of raising the bar, challenging the accepted limits and turning ambition into achievement.

SUMMIT SPEAKERS – BUSINESS



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We're constantly exploring, never satisfied where we are, always looking for the next opportunities and that's what guides us to the bigger numbers.

GENE MURTAGH

Gene Murtagh is the Group Chief Executive Officer of Kingspan Group, one of Ireland's most successful multinational companies and a global leader in high-performance building materials and energy-efficiency solutions.

In January 2005, aged just 33, he became the youngest CEO of a publicly quoted company on the Irish Stock Exchange, breaking through one of the most obvious barriers in business: age and expectation. His career is, in many ways, a story of breaking the ceiling. Joining Kingspan in 1993, Gene has spent more than three decades leading the transformation of the company from an Irish manufacturer into a truly global organisation. Kingspan employs more than 29,000 people with almost 300 manufacturing sites globally and is on target to generate over €10 billion in revenues in 2026.

Gene's story is not simply about reaching the top. It is about continually pushing beyond what was thought possible, breaking ceilings of age, scale, ambition, geography and innovation, while building an Irish company capable of competing and leading on the global stage.



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To drive the bus forward, there's always going to be challenges you face but it tends to be ok if you just deal with them as a team.

CAROLINE KEELING

Caroline Keeling is one of Ireland's most prominent business leaders and a powerful example of what it means to break the ceiling in business and leadership.

A third-generation member of the Keeling family business, Caroline joined Keelings in 1994 and progressed through a series of senior leadership roles before becoming Chief Executive Officer in 2012. Caroline helped transform Keelings from a successful Irish fruit-growing company onto the international stage. Today, Keelings employs more than 2,700 people across seven countries, sources produce from 46 countries and supplies more than 1,000 customers across 30 countries worldwide.

Her journey demonstrates that breaking the ceiling is not simply about reaching the top, it is about having the ambition and courage to redefine what is possible once you get there. Under her stewardship, Keelings continued to expand its international footprint while remaining firmly rooted in its Irish heritage as a 100% Irish-owned, third-generation family business. Caroline's journey is one of breaking barriers, challenging expectations and continually raising the ceiling for what can be achieved.



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