Gerry's Personal Playbook: From Here to Free

Written for Gerard Lane. Plain English, no legal jargon. Every legal step in here is carried out by your lawyers, never by you alone, and nothing is signed or sent until Arthur Cox approves it. Updated 12 August 2026.

The bottom line, up front

You won the court case. What's left is collecting the money and closing every door behind you. The plan below is built around the outcomes you set: sell Tinakilly for the best price rather than keep it, never become the owner of the Spanish companies, keep Spanish tax complications away from you entirely, collect the highest net cash possible, and have the fighting finished by Christmas so 2027 is yours.

Your part is deliberately small. This week it is exactly three things:

1. **Forward this to Arthur Cox** and tell them to proceed.
2. **Sign one power of attorney** when the Spanish lawyers send you the text (one visit, bring your passport).
3. **Start gathering three sets of documents** (listed in Part 5): the legal bills, the hotel improvement receipts, and the March 2025 payment records.

Everything else in this playbook explains who does what, when, and why each choice is the smartest one available. Read it once; after that it's a reference. You never need to hold any of it in your head.

Part 1: What winning looks like, and why this shape

The plan converts everything to cash and leaves you owning nothing that ties you to Connolly or to Spain. Why this is the right shape:

- **Selling Tinakilly beats keeping it** because keeping it means years more of shared history, management burden, and openings for the dispute to reignite. A sale converts the asset to money once, cleanly, and closes the door. It also removes the single biggest thing the other side could use to drag this out indefinitely.
- **Never owning the Spanish companies beats taking them** because becoming the registered owner would drag you into Spanish tax filings, possible Spanish tax on the payout, a year-end wealth-tax date, and responsibility for two companies mid-liquidation. That is a can of worms with your name on it. Being paid out as a lender and beneficiary gets you the same money without the worms.
- **Finishing by Christmas beats fighting on** because a court fight, even a winning one, runs into 2027 on its own steam: cost reviews, final accounts, possible appeals. A signed settlement ends all of it at once. Time is the one thing the other side can still spend of yours; the plan takes it off the table.

Part 2: The two golden rules

If you remember nothing else, remember these. They exist because they close the only two doors through which this could go wrong.

Rule one: everything goes through Arthur Cox. Every question, offer, letter, and signature. If Connolly, his family, his lawyers, the liquidator, or a journalist contacts you, the entire answer is: "Please speak to my solicitors, Arthur Cox." Then tell Arthur Cox it happened. Why: anything you say directly can be quoted, twisted, or treated as an agreement. One sentence, every time, keeps your position perfect.

Rule two: money only ever moves through the lawyers' accounts. Every payment lands first in your solicitors' client account, then comes to you. Nothing is ever paid to you directly by Connolly or his companies. Why: the court record shows a judgment of over EUR 7 million against Connolly from 2012, so money that passes through his hands can be grabbed by his old creditors before it reaches you, and direct payments outside the lawyers create tax and proof problems. Paid at the source, through the lawyers, every euro arrives safe and documented.

Part 3: Your team, and how to play each of them

Think of yourself as the chairman. You make a handful of decisions and sign where you're told; the departments do the work.

Arthur Cox, your Irish solicitors: the quarterback. Everything routes through them: court dates, the settlement, the hotel sale contracts, and coordination of every other adviser. How to play it: one scheduled call a week, thirty minutes, same day each week, with a short plain-English written summary after each call. Why one call: batching everything into a single touchpoint means no drip of worrying emails, nothing forgotten, and a paper trail you can reread instead of remember.

The Spanish lawyers: the shield over the money in Spain. They are doing three things now: a formal letter registering your EUR 760,000 loan with the man holding the Spanish money, registry checks, and preparing your power of attorney. Why the letter matters so much: under Spanish law the liquidator must pay a company's registered debts before giving anything to shareholders, and if he pays shareholders while your loan sits unpaid he becomes personally liable for it. That one letter makes the EUR 2 million effectively immovable until you are dealt with, it works even during Spain's August court holidays, and it costs almost nothing. Your only jobs: sign the power of attorney and provide the loan paperwork.

The Manila side: your home support. Two small things happen locally. The power of attorney: the Spanish lawyers will say whether to sign at the Spanish Consulate or at a local notary with the DFA apostille stamp (the stamp that makes a Philippine document valid abroad). Why it's urgent: it is the slowest piece of admin on the board, and every Spanish court step after the letter needs it, so starting now means Spain is never waiting on paperwork. Second, before money lands in December, a Philippine tax adviser confirms how each payment is treated for you locally. Why: the plan was built so most of what you receive is repayment of your own money, the gentlest tax category, and the adviser makes sure it is filed that way.

The Australian lawyers: filing cabinet only. One email requesting their old invoices and proof of payment. Why: every legal bill from every country goes into your claim for costs, and costs are decided once the court accountant's account is finished (his interim report is due at the start of the October term), so the paper trail must be ready by then.

The BVI side: one signature. Pointsetter, the company that owns the hotel and land, is registered in the British Virgin Islands. Its agent needs certified passport copies and proof of address for you and Virginia, then a signature putting the share register in your name alone, as the judge required. Why now: a buyer's lawyers will inspect that register, and a clean register means a faster sale at a better price.

Stuart Fitzgerald, the independent accountant: the referee. He works for the court, not for you, and that is exactly why his October numbers will be believed by everyone including the other side's lawyers. Never call him, never lobby him; everything you want him to see goes through Arthur Cox. Why this discipline matters: his independence is what turns your claims into numbers nobody can argue with.

The people you don't play at all: Connolly and everyone around him, the Spanish liquidator, and the press. Rule one covers every single one of them.

If you want the load lighter: the document-gathering and appointment-chasing in this plan is paperwork, not judgment. A trusted assistant, from your office or hired for a few hours a week, can own the checklist and the chasing so that you only ever see decisions and signatures. Worth considering purely because it buys back your time and calm; the plan works either way.

Part 4: How the hotel gets sold at the best price

The biggest number in the whole exit, so each principle carries its reason:

1. **Patience beats speed.** The legal fight ends this year; the hotel sale completes next year at full price. Why: a hotel rushed onto the market before Christmas attracts bargain hunters, while one marketed properly over six to nine months attracts real buyers. You lose nothing by waiting, because the settlement locks in your payout order before the sale even launches.
2. **Two valuations first.** Two professional hotel agents value it independently, and you set a reserve price (the number below which it simply does not sell) with Arthur Cox once both are in. Why two: one valuation is an opinion, two is a

range you can negotiate from. Until then nobody, including you, mentions a price to anyone, because the first number spoken becomes the ceiling.

3. **The hotel must keep humming.** Staff in place, bookings strong, gardens beautiful, under an independent manager during the sale. Why: buyers pay for a healthy running business and discount a distressed-looking one, and an independent manager also removes any argument about who controlled it during the sale.
4. **Clean and clear.** The share register fixed, the title already free of mortgages, and an agreed, dignified moving-out date for the house on the grounds. Why: every open question a buyer's lawyer finds becomes a price reduction, and an unresolved occupant on the property is the biggest question of all. Handled respectfully and early, it costs nothing; left late, it costs real money.
5. **Let buyers choose the route.** There are two ways to sell: the property itself, or the company that owns it. One saves the buyer stamp duty, the other is simpler; your team offers both and takes whichever bid nets you more. Why not pick in advance: your tax on the profit is the same either way, so the only thing that matters is which structure makes a buyer pay more, and the bids answer that better than any adviser can. One trap avoided early: on big property sales the buyer must hold back 15% of the price for the tax office unless shown a clearance certificate, and foreign sellers only get that certificate once the tax is squared, so the paperwork starts the week the sale process starts, never at the finish line.

Part 5: The schedule, step by step

Your personal actions are marked **YOU**. Everything else happens around you.

Week of 12 August - **YOU:** forward this to Arthur Cox with the instruction to proceed. - **YOU:** start the document gathering, three sets, scanned and sent to Arthur Cox as found (an assistant can run the chasing if you prefer): 1. Every legal bill from every country, Ireland, Spain, Australia, plus proof of payment. Why: this is the raw material for the costs claim, where roughly EUR 3 million of your spend is at stake, and recovery is decided on the quality of this paper trail. 2. Every receipt for improvements to Tinakilly since 2013. Why: the sale tax is charged on the profit above what was paid plus documented improvements, so every receipt found directly cuts the tax bill. 3. Anything from early 2025 about the EUR 450,000 payment you received in March 2025: emails, notes, bank narratives. Why: the other side claims it repaid part of what you're owed; the record shows it came from the Spanish sale money. The independent accountant will decide from the contemporaneous documents, and this single point is worth up to half a million plus interest. - **YOU:** certified passport copies and proof of address for you and Virginia, to Arthur Cox. Why: Spain needs yours for the power of attorney, and the British Virgin Islands agent needs both of yours for the share-register fix.

Week of 18 August - **YOU:** sign the Spanish power of attorney where the lawyers direct. Half a day, bring your passport. - **YOU:** one email to the Australian lawyers requesting all invoices and payment records.

Week of 25 August - **YOU:** the thirty-minute Arthur Cox call: approve the 2 September court applications, confirm the costs schedule is coming together.

2 September, court date in Dublin. You don't attend. Four things are asked for, each with its purpose: - The audit continues even if Connolly appeals. Why: in Irish procedure an appeal does not automatically pause anything, and putting that on the record kills the delay-and-hope strategy in one stroke. - An official (called a receiver) is appointed to catch any money headed to Connolly before it reaches him. Why: his debts exceed his assets, so every euro intercepted at the source is a euro that cannot disappear. - Connolly is ordered to pay now the EUR 225,538 he has already agreed he owes. Why: an admitted debt should not wait for the audit timetable, and the pressure moves the settlement closer. - The Spanish share transfer is paused, with protections instead. Why: you don't want those shares or their tax consequences; pausing the transfer while keeping the trust finding and adding a no-payout direction gives you the protection without the ownership. - **YOU:** take the update call afterward. That's all.

September - Valuations land mid-month. **YOU:** one meeting, video is fine, to set the reserve price and agree the one-page standing decisions with Arthur Cox: the negotiating band for Connolly's exit package, the minimum acceptable costs figure, and who may agree what without a call to Manila. Why standing decisions: deals die when the client becomes the bottleneck; deciding the bands once, in daylight, means October negotiations never stall waiting for you.

Start of the October term - The court's accountant, Stuart Fitzgerald, delivers his interim report; every estimate becomes an official number. The costs question is then taken up (the court reserved it until the account is finished). Your lawyers expect roughly two-thirds of your bills to land on Connolly, though that is their expectation, not yet a court order. **YOU:** nothing but the update call.

Mid-October: the settlement conference - With the costs order and the audit numbers in hand, the other side's lawyers can read the arithmetic: everything Connolly has is consumed by what he owes, and the exit package on the table is the only path where he walks away with anything. Why settle rather than press on: a settlement now delivers the money by Christmas, while pressing on delivers the same result in 2027 with another year of fees, appeals risk, and your time. **YOU:** attend by video from Manila, your evening. The lawyers negotiate inside the bands you already set; you say yes to the final shape.

Mid-November - **YOU:** sign the global settlement. Keep late October to mid-November free of travel. This single document ends the litigation, locks the hotel sale and the order in which proceeds are paid, settles Spain, fixes the costs figure, and closes every future claim. Why one global document: partial deals leave live wires; one signature that ends everything is the only version that delivers actual peace.

December - The Spanish money is paid out through the lawyers before 31 December. Why before year-end: it closes the liquidation cleanly, avoids the Spanish year-end tax assessment date touching anyone, and puts the cash in hand before Christmas. The court cases are formally closed. **YOU:** confirm your receiving account with Arthur Cox only, and give your bank advance notice of large euro inflows so their compliance checks are pre-cleared and nothing freezes at the finish line. - Then: Christmas with the fighting over.

First half of 2027 - The hotel sale completes at full price. The final money flows through the lawyers to you. The Philippine adviser files whatever needs filing. Done, fully and finally.

Part 6: Making it light

The plan is built so you stop carrying this now:

- **One touchpoint:** everything batches into the weekly Arthur Cox call. If something truly urgent happens, they call you; otherwise it waits.
- **Everything in writing:** a short plain-English summary after every call, so the paper holds it instead of your head.
- **An assistant if you want one:** the chasing is paperwork, not judgment, and a few hours a week of help turns your role into signatures and one call.
- **Permission to put it down:** between your marked steps there is genuinely nothing for you to do. The lawyers are paid to watch. Walk, swim, enjoy Manila. The plan works whether or not you think about it, and the October negotiation goes better if you arrive rested.

Part 7: The guardrails, what you never do, and why

- Never discuss the case with Connolly's side, the liquidator, or the press: anything said directly can be quoted or twisted, and silence costs nothing.
- Never agree anything verbally: if it isn't written and lawyer-approved, it doesn't exist, and verbal "agreements" are how won cases get reopened.
- Never receive or pay money outside the lawyers' accounts: his creditors, proof, and tax all live in that rule.
- Never sign anything not pre-cleared by Arthur Cox, however small: small documents are where big rights get given away.
- Never let anyone rush you into a deal before the October numbers land: early offers are priced low precisely because the official numbers aren't in yet.
- Never become the registered owner of the Spanish companies: you are being paid out, not signed in, and ownership would import the tax filings, liabilities, and administration you've chosen to avoid.

Part 8: The finish line

Picture the 31st of December, 2026. The court files are closed. The Spanish money is in. The costs are agreed and flowing. The hotel is being sold professionally at a price you set, with completion money arriving in the new year. Connolly is out of your life on signed, final terms that can never be reopened.

You kept the records for thirteen years, held the line, and won in open court. What remains is a short list of signatures, one consulate visit, a few boxes of paper, and two video calls. Follow the steps, trust the team, take the walks. You're nearly home, and you're walking out the winner.