

AS I  
SEE IT

Anne Sheridan

More old plans  
for a new future

A COFFEE and a sugary Danish - Rome was not built on a breakfast like this.

If a country marches on its stomach, a 'breakfast briefing' in Castletroy last week showed that this is a country on the verge of starvation and/or constipation.

We are big on 20-year grand plans, but short on real solutions for the here and now.

Those present in the Carlton Castletroy Park Hotel were the "creme de la creme", said one speaker, but the offerings were simply pie in the sky. The 100-strong (predominantly male) audience who rose at an ungodly hour to hear presidential candidate Sean Gallagher address business leaders in the region were "heroes" - in his eyes at least. But I bet they didn't feel like it.

It should have been inspiring, but left many depressed at the long hard road ahead, searching for even the slightest glimmer of light at the end of a black hole.

After a short lived sugar rush to the head, the high octane rhetoric by Gallagher and University of Limerick economist Dr Stephen Kinsella left people on a downward spiral as they made their way back to work and reality.

Dr Kinsella put forth an admirable grand plan about why UL should buy up parts of the city, developing satellite campuses, spinning out benefits for a near-dying city. It would



**Time to focus:** Some of the audience at last week's business breakfast briefing

boost the city's population, football, economic base etc. His arguments were completely right and had logic - for the city definitely, though not perhaps for UL.

Yet, we have heard this all before. It's akin to every presidential candidate saying they want to do for job creation what Mary McAleese did for peace. Tell us how!

Except for the fact that Kinsella appears to be the first person inside UL to come out and say what should be done.

He has been thinking about this for years, he said, and concedes that it will possibly take the lifetime of three UL presidencies, if it happens at all. The only problem is that it has also been on the minds of Labour councillor Joe Leddin, the author Frank McCourt, and many others, who pushed it even when times were good to no avail.

Universities are on their knees, and UL especially won't have the luxury of developing an off-site campus in the midst of an economic depression when - (a) they have hundreds of acres of land in Castletroy (and Clare) and (b) any State funds they receive will have to be poured into research, development and improving the lecturer/student ratio to climb its way up from the bottom of many league tables.

In response to a query from this newspaper on the proposals, UL President, Professor Don Barry said they are very open to any proposals that would enhance the link between UL and the city, "but the very considerable funding constraints that we must operate under at this economically-challenging time severely limit our room for manoeuvre." In the meantime, we'll have to think on a smaller scale and much smaller budget.

After a €1.7m  
redevelopment,  
Limerick City  
Gallery of Art  
reopens its doors  
to the public next  
month, **Mike  
Dwane** reports

DEVELOPERS of a five-storey apartment block overlooking the southern end of the People's Park learned some years ago that the people of Limerick regard it as a sensitive location.

And so when it came to designing an extension to Limerick City Gallery of Art at the opposite end, City Hall had to be sure the park and the building would complement one another.

Architect Hugh Murray is confident that the public will see for themselves that this balance has been achieved when the new-look LCGA opens next month following a €1.7 million redevelopment.

Two of the main elements of the project - a cafe and a social/educational space - have windows facing directly onto the park and it is hoped this will attract more visitors to the gallery as it aims to double the numbers through the doors.

"The gallery is now more transparent with the park so people as they pass by will be more aware of what is going on inside. Seeing the cafe there will be all the more reason for them to linger a while and take in an exhibition," said Mr Murray.

As well as the sensitivities of the park, Mr Murray (project architect) and John O'Reilly (design architect) also had to contend with adding to a protected structure, the Carnegie Library, built in 1906 and home to the city's art collection since the 1940s.

"We were very conscious of



**Park life:** Staff at the Limerick City Gallery of Art preparing for the reopening next month are, from left, Ciara

what an important landmark the Carnegie Free Library was. Our ambition was to protect it and not fight with it architecturally. We feel we have now delivered a project that is in contrast with, but sympathetic to the original structure," Mr Murray said.

Twelve years have passed since the gallery got its first modern annex, a gallery to the south, and temporary director Pippa Little said it had turned out to be a judicious move to hold off on the second phase for a number of years. An investment of €1.7 million (split 70-30 between the Department of the

Arts and City Hall) is not to be sniffed at but Dr Little said the project had been delivered for 50 per cent less than when it was costed during the construction bubble.

"It was a very long process and obviously the cost at the height of the boom was something that was a bit off-putting. We were fortunate to have held back a little. But it was something that was at all times being pursued, particularly by (former director) Mike Fitzpatrick," she said.

Contracts for the new cafe were signed last week with Zest, the company which already op-

erates businesses in Ennis and at Shannon Airport

"We're delighted to be working with them and we feel their product is quite diverse with cakes, breads, light lunch options and refreshments," Dr Little said.

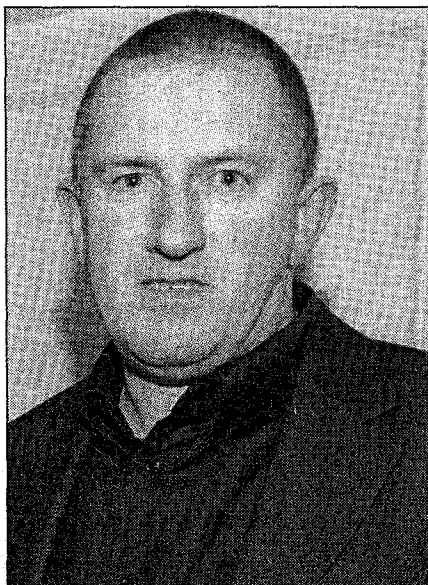
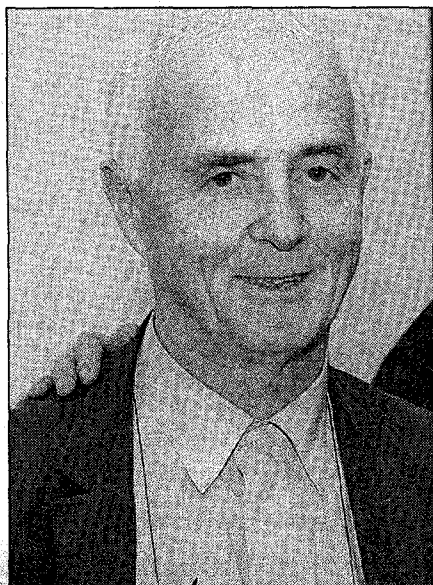
Also facing on to the park will be a social space for community groups and schools.

"It will allow us to show exhibitions from community and voluntary groups and by locals pupils. And groups are interested in bringing music here. The Irish Choirs Association out in UL are running a series of events and they are interested in using it so the space is open for as many different uses as possible."

The main business of the gallery will remain exhibitions and showcasing the city's permanent collection. Including works by Yeats, Orpen, Lavery and Keating, the permanent collection is conservatively valued at €5 million.

"It fluctuates with the art market it is worth at least that. And it's really important for the people of Limerick. Because of the initial remit of the committee that set it up, they were looking for portraits of Limerick people, images of the city. So it has a documentary aspect to it. It holds the memory of the city if you like," said Dr Little.

As construction progressed, some of the works have been at the Hunt Museum, while others



**Presentation:** Architect Hugh Murray, left, and Labour's Cllr Tom Shortt



# taps into park life



rs, Ger Moloney, Dermot Ryan, Siobhan O'Malley and Pippa Little, temporary director/curator

been loaned out, 29 pieces to museum in Dachau as part of an ambition of Irish art.

When they arrive back, the things will be displayed or ad in the climatic conditions appropriate to works of such e. In the old gallery environmental specifications were not ting the best international dards.

Dr Little assured Cllr Kathleen Leedlin at a meeting of the council's cultural committee last that there was no indication of the paintings had deteriorated over the course of a half-century's exposure.

What we have had installed art of the project are two big s in the permanent collection age and permanent collection ary that allows us to climate rol very carefully." is, she explained to the Limerick Leader, was not simply a er of better preserving art- is but also ensured LCGA met international standards that id allow the gallery attract -profile loans.

means that if we should get ully delicate items, if we start ng into Monets or Manets, y high value territory, they e with very stringent cons- ns, we can now meet those itions in those two spaces. To ct those loans and in nego- ng those loans, it's standard somebody will ask for your rds from this time last year to what the conditions were like

and then they will assess from there," explained Dr Little.

Cllr Tom Shortt, an art teacher, said that the permanent collection had been "quite poorly presented in recent decades", being laid out too incoherently for his liking.

While Mr Murray confessed himself a fan of that old gallery, he said the new space housing works from the permanent collection would not have as many on show at any one time in an effort to set them off better.

"It will be more selective so that they are not all jostling for your attention at the same time," he said.

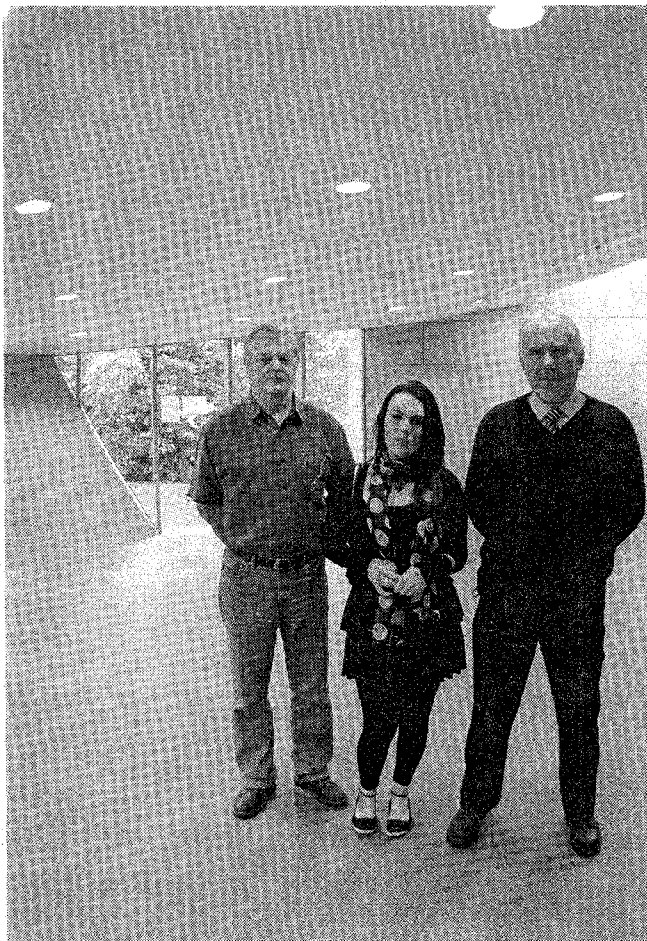
Cllr Shortt said he also hoped that the gallery - which holds up to 10 exhibitions a year - would bring in more "crowd-pleasing" exhibitions as well as high quality visual arts exhibitions such as e+va.

"We do intend to increase our audiences," Dr Little told him.

"That is one of our major goals. We in fact hope to double the numbers we have seen in recent years of 26,000 to 50,000 and to create a real tourist pull in the middle of the city," she said.

Being hooked up for wi-fi and extended evening and weekend opening hours should help the gallery in that regard.

The doors reopen on Pery Square next month before an official reopening by the Minister for the Arts Jimmy Deenihan, which is pencilled in for January 16, 2012.



Room with a view: Dermot Ryan, Ciara Peters and Ger Moloney in the new social space at LCGA, facing onto the People's Park



**Expert talent:** Samantha Rathling who will speak this Wednesday evening on her amazing business success

## Enterprising Week to start with Samantha

THE story of how one businesswoman grew her company's annual turnover to €4 million, having started from scratch, is one of the expected highlights of 'Enterprise Mid-West' in Limerick, which starts this Wednesday October 19.

Limerick City and County plays host to three events next week, including a talk from Samantha Rathling of Expect Talent on Wednesday evening.

Rathling has successfully managed to turn her recruitment firm into a multi-million euro business in Ireland and the UK, despite the downturn and will be speaking to other women in business in Limerick about how to grow a business through networking.

The Women in Business event, which also includes a discussion around online networking and 'interactive' networking, takes place at the Woodlands House Hotel in Adare and is open to non-members and guests.

Meanwhile, the experiences of PAUL Partnership clients who set up businesses recently will be highlighted at an event on Friday morning at the Absolute Hotel in Limerick City.

Aimed at those who are considering the move into self-employment, the workshop will also cover the supports available to unemployed people, such as the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance. The 'Considering Self-

Employment' seminar runs from 10am to 1.30pm at the Absolute Hotel and is run in conjunction with the local Enterprise Boards.

Finally, the annual 'Mid West Business Showcase' is taking place at the Dell Complex in Raheen on Thursday (October 20), which is also expected to draw huge crowds during the week.

Speaking in the run-up to the first event in Limerick, Ned Toomey, CEO of the Limerick County Enterprise Board said: "The three events in Limerick are aimed at existing small business owners in addition to those who are seriously thinking about setting up a business in the county or city."

Eamon Ryan, CEO of Limerick City Enterprise Board said they can offer a wide range of enterprise supports to small companies, such as mentoring, training and access to funding in some cases."

The month-long small business initiative is co-organised by Limerick County and Limerick City Enterprise Boards and travels to Kerry County Enterprise Board from October 24. The Enterprise Boards in North Tipperary and Clare have already staged a series of events locally for small business owners and further information around the events in Limerick on October 19, 20 and 21 can be seen at [www.enterprisemidwest.com](http://www.enterprisemidwest.com)

**LIMERICK LEADER**  
**ONLINE**



For breaking local news and sport  
visit: [www.limerickleader.ie](http://www.limerickleader.ie)