

Limerick Profile

By Jennifer O'Connor

Diarmuid Scully

LIMERICK CITY COUNCILLOR



Picture: Keith Wiseman

“People get cynical about politics, but it’s the one way that an ordinary person can make a difference. For me it’s still a noble cause, even if in practice that isn’t always the case for everyone.”

THEY say a week is a long time in politics, if so Fine Gael councillor Diarmuid Scully has been waiting an eternity to find out if he will be put on his party’s card for the general election.

Since stepping down as Mayor seven months ago, Cllr Scully has been waiting to see if he will be put on the ticket. His wait is almost over, with a decision due this week.

“It’s been a long wait and a bit stressful. The not knowing is the worst. My life has been on hold for seven months,” he said.

Cllr Scully was first elected to ward three in 1999 and has been working as a full-time councillor, although it is a situation that he will have to review should he not be going forward for election to the Dáil.

“I will have to get a career outside of politics. Balancing that will be

hard, but it has come to a point where a decision has to be made—I will either be working full-time on a national level or part-time on a local level.”

He observed that there is volatility in the minds of voters, reflected in opinion polls. But he says that while Fine Gael wasn’t “at the races” in 2002, a delicate balance is now emerging, between the current government remaining in power or sweeping changes being introduced.

“I think that the desire for change will overcome the fear of change. It will come down to who can articulate best their vision for Ireland. Why I am hopeful of getting on the Fine Gael card is that I want to do more.”

While the hours of a politician are erratic, he says that nobody is forced into politics and so he doesn’t agree when politicians moan about their

workload. Indeed he says that most people are conscious of politicians’ private lives.

“My wife Ruth had our second child Ferdia recently and the number of calls dropped. Without saying anything people stepped back from it. People I know were coming up to me and saying that they knew the problems could wait. The same happened when Michael was born two years ago.”

He said that has been delighted to be involved in a time when the city is undergoing such a transition. That he has been involved in an era when the city council could drop business rates two years in a row and when pedestrianisation has taken a hold in the city centre has been fantastic.

“It is nice to be here when the city is doing well. It’s not a city without problems. The emergence

of heroin in the city is one. But none of them are unsolvable. Reputation affects confidence and business investment so we have to get out there and tackle the issues. We have wonderful assets, but it can be very hard to shake the negative impression.”

The reason that Cllr Scully has been drawn to the national stage is the same reason that he first got involved in student politics while studying in UL and later as a city councillor—to make change.

“It’s not to make speeches, it’s to effect change. It’s the only way to be heard. Politics the only way that you can effect change. People get cynical about politics, but it’s the one way that an ordinary person can make a difference. For me it’s still a noble cause, even if in practice that isn’t always the case for everyone.”

Name:	Diarmuid Scully
Occupation:	City Councillor
Location:	Lynwood Park
Favourite thing about Limerick:	The people. And obviously it’s my home. I was born here, I grew up here and I love it.
Worst thing about Limerick:	The lack of self-belief. We allow the negative reputation to carry on.

Women urged to get into politics

Jennifer O'Connor

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THE Deputy leader of the Progressive Democrats has urged women to ensure that more women are involved in policy making and to feminise political debate and culture in Ireland.

Deputy Liz O'Donnell was speaking at the Women's Forum Conference in the University of Limerick on Friday February 2.

She said that since becoming a practising politician 15 years ago the number of women in the Dáil has been stuck at approximately 22 for that amount of time, and that this needs to change.

“I regard myself as an accidental politician, persuaded by Mary Harney to cross the bridge from private life to public office. I would encourage other women to do so. So many women balk at politics, resiling from the lifestyle, the combative nature of



Liz O'Donnell TD with Anna Doughan, director of Human Resources UL, at the Woman's Forum in Limerick last Friday. Picture: Keith Wiseman

politics and the privacy and family issues, which can come into conflict. It's not for the fainthearted. But it is as rewarding and challenging a career as one can find,” she said.

Deputy O'Donnell said there is no resistance among the electorate for a woman to be elected, but the problem lies in the first hurdle of being selected and nominated by parties to contest.

“That’s where action is needed by parties to pro-

mote and facilitate the nomination and selection of women candidates to contest in a constituency, for a winnable seat.”

Deputy O'Donnell is no stranger to Limerick having been educated in Salesians Convent. From there, she studied in Trinity College's Law School. The Dublin native was a Vice Chair of the Women's Political Association and delegate of the National Women's Council before being elected.



By DEIRDRE O'SHAUGHNESSY
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O'Donnell visit

PROGRESSIVE Democrats TD Liz O'Donnell last week spoke to the University of Limerick Women's Forum.

In her speech Ms O'Donnell spoke of her experiences as a lawyer, councillor, TD and Junior Minister in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

She praised members of her party for their pro-women stance and condemned the situation in larger parties which sees women put on tickets as ‘sweeper candidates’, to enable male candidates get elected.

Ms O'Donnell's speech was followed by a number of questions from audience members, including one on Friday's Irish Times poll which saw the PDs' vote down to 1%.

The UL Women's Forum was established last year and has hosted a range of speakers on Women's Issues.

Access Campus

THE University of Limerick Access Campus, on Monday celebrated

months of hard work by members of the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) with the launch of a Photographic Exhibition and 2007 Calendar with a difference.

The Exhibition and Calendar were produced by members of the IWA as part of a year-long course in photography at the University of Limerick Access Campus.

The Exhibition is being displayed in the UL Access Campus, which is located at the Roxboro premises of LEDP. It was officially opened by Mr Brian Crowley MEP.

The exhibition and calendar are the result of a programme, which has been running for the past two years as a joint initiative between the Access Campus and the IWA.

The success of the programme has been described by Donal O'Leary of the Access Campus as another step toward one of the Access Campus key objectives of bringing the University to the community and the community to the University.

The aims of the course were centred on the idea

of teaching the participants “how to make a photograph rather than just take a photograph”, with Eoin Stephenson, from the Audio-Visual unit of the ITD Department, UL facilitating the sessions.

Speaking from the launch event Donal O'Leary of the Access Campus said that as a result of the time spent on this course the participants now feel that they have the confidence and ability to work with a peer group and share what they have learned about the practical application of photography and the awareness that it brings.

“This programme illustrates further how the Access Campus helps to contribute positively to an ethos of active citizenship in Limerick City South, through its work programmes with many community and voluntary organisations. This Exhibition and Calendar reflects two years of hard work on the part of the programme participants and their facilitators,” Mr O'Leary added.