



Stephen Manning has been a prominent figure in the Integrity Ireland movement over the past four years.

Manning wants to shake things up in Dáil Éireann

By Orla Hearn

Ballyhaunis-based Stephen Manning insists he has no unreal expectations of becoming the next taoiseach. His decision to declare as an Independent candidate for the 2016 general election is more morally than politically inspired.

Raised in England, Dundalk, and Tuam, Stephen is the grandson of a Ballinrobe grandmother and settled in Mayo with his wife and three children in 2006, having worked and studied extensively in the UK, US, and Japan.

His first introduction to the Mayo electorate was as one of a number of prospective candidates seeking selection to contest the general election under the 1st Independent Mayo initiative. Stephen claims he was subsequently cut from the process without notice or explanation and that the matter is currently the subject of legal proceedings.

He is probably best known to the Mayo electorate as the administrator of the Integrity Ireland project and is hopeful that his election campaign will help to promote the work of that registered volunteer association and its values which, he believes, are “sadly missing in Irish politics” at present.

Established four years ago, the remit of Integrity Ireland is to bring together those who believe they have been wronged by the establishment and, in particular, the justice system. It is not a political party and is largely concerned with providing information about citizens’ rights, Stephen says.

“I feel there is a happy marriage between

the work of Integrity Ireland and the work of decent politicians and there is a happy marriage between the timing of a great many issues that are coming to the fore at the moment to do with, in particular, the justice system and how it’s operating or not operating and the timing of this election as well as the personalities involved,” he said.

Stephen’s message to the electorate is to pay careful attention to the personalities, characters and track records of the people who are asking to be elected. If they do not have an honest track record and have not proven themselves to be people of integrity with the capability of looking after the population rather than looking after themselves then they shouldn’t be elected.

Operating with the campaign tagline “Let’s shake up the establishment”, Stephen’s manifesto provides for the safeguarding of rural Ireland and investment in transport and broadband; the protection of homes and families from ruthless banks and corporations; the punishment of waste, corruption, and incompetence in the public sector; the derailment of the “gravy train” by linking TD’s wages to the economy; the reform of the policing and justice system and protection of the rights of the people.

“We need to get more outspoken voices into the senior positions of authority and power in the State,” he explains.

He is also urging the electorate to resist considering the politicians that they have elected to the Dáil as local politicians.

“Once they get elected to the Dáil they are national politicians and while they should be keeping an eye on their own constituency

they shouldn’t be doing things for Mayo that penalise another county. It should be about how we can best serve Ireland first and then the local constituency second,” he said, adding that politicians should be elected on the basis of having a true vocation for public service:

“If we are not trying to better ourselves and our country then we are not true patriots.

“It’s the quality of the individuals that we are electing that we should be looking at not at all these petty arguments about who will and won’t do things for us.”

Stephen also subscribes to citizen empowerment driven initiatives and campaigns such as the One Year Initiative (1Yi) and Reinstatement 48 idea which are both geared at giving Irish people a greater say in governance and legislation.

“We are only living in a democracy for three weeks every five years. As soon as a major political party gets elected again they seem to think they can do whatever they damn well please for the next five years. Look at all the water protestors. They have literally been ignored.”

Stephen stresses that he and his fellow Integrity Ireland members have not been found wanting when it comes to courageously standing up and speaking out about injustices. “If I were to be elected I can assure you that I wouldn’t have a quiet five years in the Dáil. I would be continuously pointing out ways to improve what we are doing and challenging those that are getting away with liberties and taking advantage and making fools of us.”