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MAGAZINE



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THE IRISH TIMES

WEEKEND EDITION

€4.00 (€3.00 Northern Ireland)

irishtimes.com

Saturday/Sunday, October 26/27, 2024

Academic honours Graduation week at DCU



■ Graduates from Dublin City University at the Helix on the Glasnevin campus where 12 separate ceremonies took place over four days this week. PHOTOGRAPH: KYRAN O'BRIEN/DCU



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WEEKEND

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Stanley faced sexual harassment claim

Former Sinn Féin TD insists complaint against him was 'politically motivated'

Party inquiry repeatedly found aspects of Stanley's evidence not to be credible

PAT LEAHY
Political Editor

An internal Sinn Féin inquiry into a complaint against Laois-Offaly TD Brian Stanley was preparing to make a finding against him of gross misconduct on grounds of sexual harassment when he resigned from the party a fortnight ago, internal party documents show.

Mr Stanley and the young woman who made the complaint were told that after an inquiry, which heard testimony from both sides, the party intended to make a finding that she had been telling the truth and parts of his evidence were "not credible", according to a draft report of the inquiry seen by The Irish Times.

They were given seven days to respond to the proposed find-

ings. After five days Mr Stanley resigned from the party claiming he had been subjected to a "kangaroo court" and there was a "clique within the party [which] have gone to extreme lengths to damage my reputation and character".

Yesterday, in a statement to The Irish Times in response to detailed queries about the inquiry, Mr Stanley's solicitor repeated his "strenuous denial of any wrongdoing". The report "is, in fact, a draft report, not a final report", and Mr Stanley contests the "provisional findings", the statement said.

'Demonstrably abused'
Mr Stanley's solicitor said the complaint against the TD was "solely and exclusively politically motivated", and that it was

made before the general election and the selection of candidates. The Sinn Féin disciplinary process was "demonstrably abused throughout", the statement said.

The inquiry by the party began in August after the woman made a complaint about an incident at a Dublin hotel on Wednesday, October 11th, 2023, after the woman had travelled to meet Mr Stanley.

She had previously worked for Sinn Féin several years ago, and was seeking advice on applying for employment in the EU. At Mr Stanley's invitation they ate together at Leinster House and had drinks at a pub.

The Sinn Féin inquiry repeatedly found aspects of Mr Stanley's evidence to be not credible and ultimately said that "taking

all the available evidence into consideration, that on the balance of probability that narrative as put forward by the complainant is essentially true", the draft report states.

The woman said she was upset and traumatised in the days following the incident, and communicated with Mr Stanley by text message. The texts were presented as evidence to the inquiry, which it said in the draft report were "not disputed".

She sent him a request for €60,000 to compensate her for what she claimed happened on the night, text messages show.

The woman now says that her request for money was an "unwise, idiotic, and ill-judged decision while in a state of shock and powerlessness". The woman told The Irish

Times that she never pursued the request and instead spoke to a helpline and to people close to her to help deal with the emotional toll of the incident.

Mr Stanley, in his evidence to the inquiry, strongly disputed the version of events presented by the woman, and says that she is involved with others in the party in a conspiracy to remove him.

Continues on Page 2



Cillian Murphy & Eileen Walsh
INTERVIEW TICKET

Man jailed for life over 'depraved' catfishing

ASHLEIGH McDONALD

A Co Armagh man whose on-line catfishing caused the death of a 12-year-old girl in the US has been sentenced to life with a minimum of 20 years in jail.

As he sentenced Alexander McCartney (26), from Lissummon Road in Newry, for a total of 185 charges including manslaughter, yesterday Mr Justice O'Hara said "he used social media on an industrial scale to inflict...terrible and catastrophic damage on young girls".

The offences admitted by McCartney included the manslaughter of 12-year old Cima-

rion Thomas from West Virginia in the US who took her life in May 2018 after she was targeted on Snapchat.

Her father Ben Thomas, a US army veteran, took his life 18 months later.

Other charges admitted by McCartney included multiple offences of causing a child to engage in a sex act while he pleaded guilty to 58 charges of blackmail and multiple offences of possessing indecent images of children in a period of offending from 2013 to 2019.

Branding McCartney's offending as "sexploitation" involving "sadism and depravi-

ty", the judge said the life sentence - normally reserved for murder cases - was necessary.

McCartney's victims spanned the globe and he used social media to exploit young girls aged between 10 and 16.

Fake online profiles

Primarily using Snapchat as well as Instagram and Kik, he engaged in catfishing - where he created fake online profiles pretending to be young teenage girls - to deceive his victims into sending sexual images of themselves.

Once they had sent the images, McCartney revealed his true

identity and threatened that if they did not perform certain sexual acts, he would send the images he obtained of them to their friends and family.

Outside court, Detective Chief Superintendent Eamonn Corrigan, from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, said: McCartney's offending was on an "industrial scale".

"I reflect on the judge's comments, McCartney is a dangerous, relentless, cruel paedophile," he said. "There was nothing that was going to stop him, apart from putting him in jail."

He added: "We believe that

the number of victims is approximately 3,500. We have identified as many as we possibly could. Obviously, to charge and identify all those offences would be impractical, so a sample of cases were brought forward."

The officer said McCartney had caused devastation and stolen childhoods.

"The scale of his offending, it was just on an industrial scale," he said.

➔ **Scale of Armagh man's horrific 'catfishing' crimes may never be known: page 4**

Weather

Rain in the west will reach the east coast before noon and continue through the day. Highs of 12-15 degrees.

THE IRISH TIMES
24-28 Tara Street, Dublin 2.
D02 CX89
Telephone: (01) 9203900
Online: irishtimes.com
The recommended retail price of THE IRISH TIMES in the Republic of Ireland is €4.00
Subscriptions: Tel: (01) 9203901
Email: subscribe@irishtimes.com



9 771393 351765 43
Vol. No. 5212. Saturday, October 26, 2024

Home News

Kyran Durnin: Gardaí have identified key suspects as part of the investigation into the disappearance, assumed killing, of the Drogheda boy: page 2

Gerry Hutch: the Dublin criminal has appeared in a Lanzarote court as part of a money laundering investigation: page 4

Daylight saving ends



Clocks go back: Clocks and watches should be put back one hour at 2am tomorrow, signalling the end of daylight saving time

Business Today

Rents: Bewley's has 'a real shot' of keeping its cafe on Grafton Street open after a court halved its rent yesterday, managing director Cól Campbell said: page 16

Tech: Profits at Intel's Shannon-based R&D operation were up in 2023 despite reduced turnover: page 17

Sports Weekend

Women's soccer: Ireland's 6-0 win over Georgia yesterday nudges them a step closer to making it to the European Championships for the first time

Racing: Cheltenham Festival feature races, like the Gold Cup and Champion Hurdle, will have 4pm starts in 2025

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