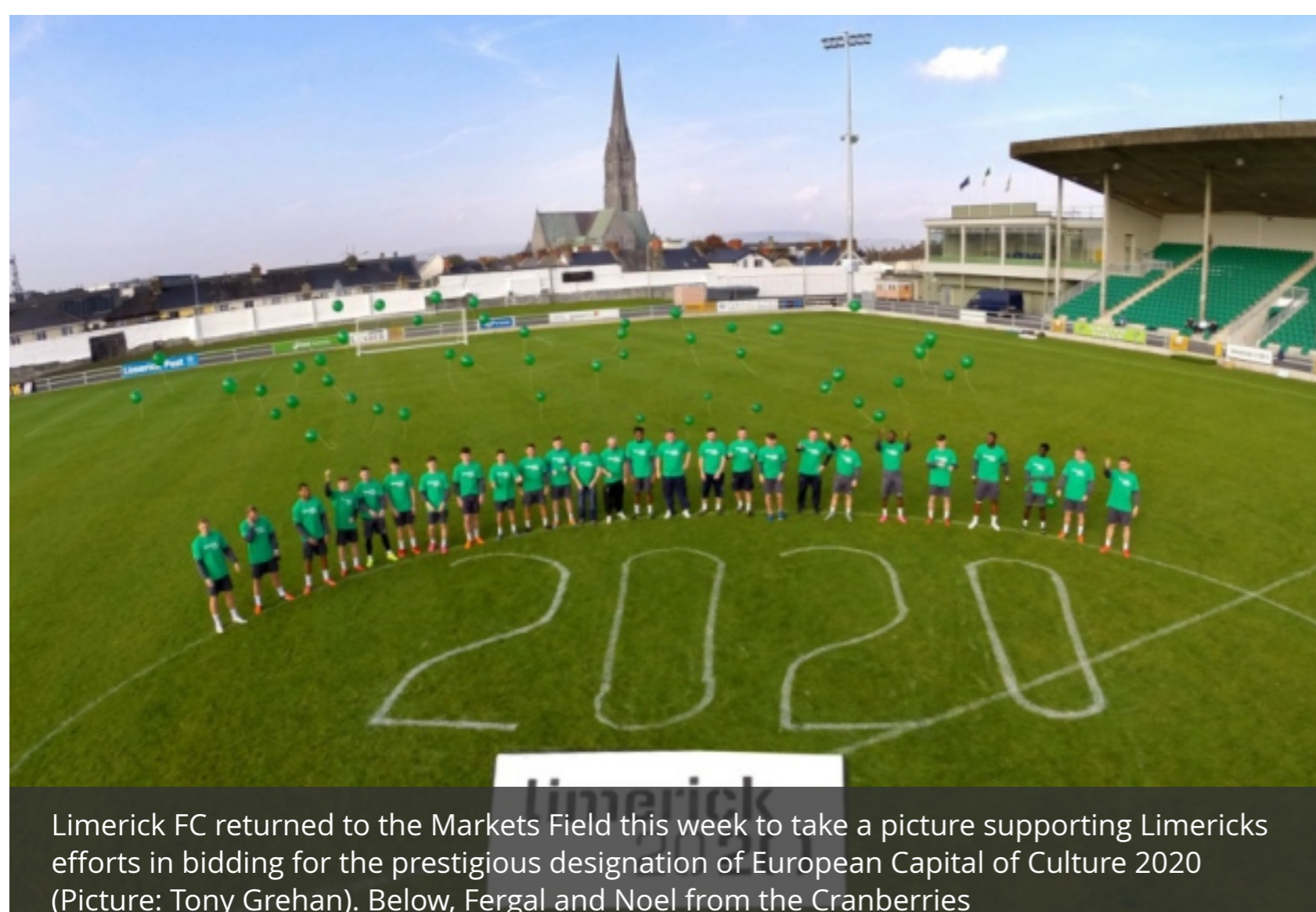


Limerick comes out in force for EU Capital of Culture bid



Limerick FC returned to the Markets Field this week to take a picture supporting Limerick's efforts in bidding for the prestigious designation of European Capital of Culture 2020 (Picture: Tony Grehan). Below, Fergal and Noel from the Cranberries

by Alan Owens

THREE local icons, with 115 international rugby caps, 40 million album sales and a host of literature awards between them, have come out in support of the [European Capital of Culture 2020 bid](#).

Rugby legend Paul O'Connell, Noel Hogan of The Cranberries and author Donal Ryan have all voiced support for Limerick's bid for the prized designation, the first stage of which is just a matter of days away.

And Limerick FC have got in on the act, the players in the team - currently in the midst of a playoff to stay in the premier division - posing for a picture in Markets Field, showing their support for the bid.

Having **recently submitted an 80-page bid document**, Limerick's fate, along with fellow prospective capitals of culture in Dublin, Galway and the South East regional clustering of Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny, will be whittled from four down to two following a presentation on November 13 in Dublin Castle.

Rugby icon Paul O'Connell said that [City of Culture](#) had proved that there was a "huge wealth of cultural activity be it sport, music, art, theatre, fashion, community and heritage" in Limerick.



"Personally, I really saw that proven in 2014. It was fantastic to see the crowds of people at all the various cultural events that were put on across the city and county," he said.

"In the past Limerick had a misconceived reputation, 2014 really worked on the regeneration of that and if Limerick won the European Capital of Culture bid for 2020 it would capitalise on that regeneration, bringing Limerick to the very top of the cultural realm in both Ireland and Europe."

The Limerickman, who also spoke this week of his latest struggle with injury ahead of his move to Toulon - likely now in December - said that Limerick had produced "some amazing artists, designers, entertainers, writers, performers and much more.

"Given my career, I'm extremely familiar with the importance of teamwork and the Limerick of today is now working as a strong team," he explained. "It is a confident, energetic place that is clearly on the road to a great future. Limerick 2020 would give many Limerick people the opportunity to excel on a broader stage, connecting the people of Limerick, culturally and I believe the bid comes at a perfect time."

Musician Noel Hogan said Limerick was "almost unrecognisable, physically and culturally" from the distant days of the 1990s, when the Cranberries came to prominence.

"It is still continuing to evolve on every level. A lot of outsiders generally don't realise the wealth of culture and beauty in the city," he said.

"Limerick, with the wealth of experience we garnered from last year's [City of Culture](#), there is no city better placed to be European Capital of Culture in 2020. Not to mention it's a fun city," he added.

Author Donal Ryan, long-listed for the Booker Prize in 2013 for his novel *The Spinning Heart* and writer in residence in UL, said: "There is a performance in the everyday in Limerick. The smallest little thing can become a fascinating drama. There is an addictive quality to the way Limerick people tell their stories, a sense of fearlessness that goes back almost a thousand years. Limerick stood against so many invaders and was never conquered. It says it all really."

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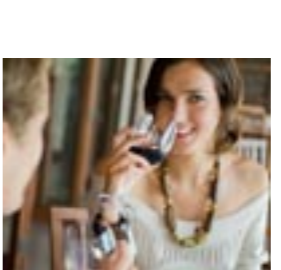
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