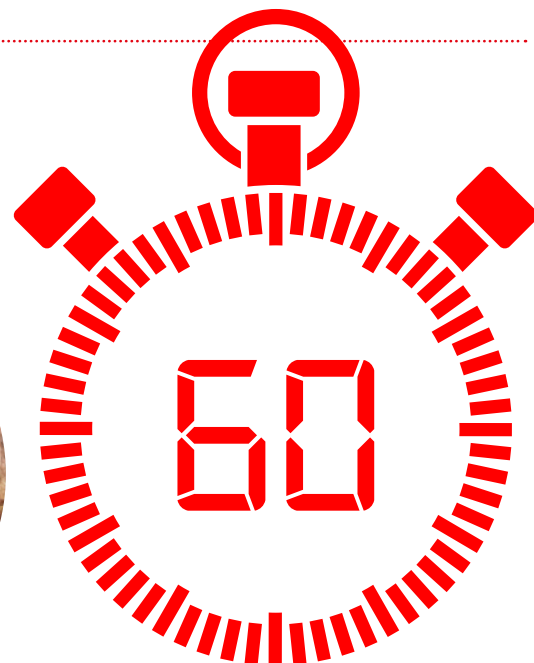


60-SECONDS WITH:

SINEAD
HARRIS
PARTNER
WITHERS

Q What do you like most about your job?

A I enjoy the fact that the work is demanding and intellectually challenging. In practice, my day to day enjoyment comes from the privilege of working with an enthusiastic, dedicated and often brilliant group of colleagues and fellow professionals.

Q What motivated you to pursue this specialisation?

A My early practice as a junior lawyer was in the aftermath of the 2009 financial crisis. After moving to the BVI, among other things, I cut my teeth working on the many strands of insolvency litigation arising from the Madoff Ponzi scheme. At the time, BVI jurisdiction was developing rapidly, following the opening of the Commercial Court in 2009. It felt like we were constantly pushing the boundaries and at the cutting edge of cross-border insolvency and asset recovery. It was (and still is) an exciting and constantly evolving specialisation.

Q What is the most rewarding thing about your work?

A I enjoy the fact that no two cases are the same. Each time I meet a client they have a unique problem which requires innovative and creative solutions. Sometimes it can be a long and painstaking process and something of a 'chess game'. The harder and more complex the case, the more satisfying when you are able to make a breakthrough for your client.

Q Do you have any career aspirations, and have you achieved any of them so far?

A There are many milestones of qualifications and promotions that I have achieved and hope to achieve - but my main aspirations are always to be a trusted advisor to clients and a valued colleague to my team. These aspirations are a constant work in progress, and I feel I am always learning.

Q What do you see as being the biggest trends of 2023 in your practice area?

A Anecdotally, it seems January has already seen an uptick in insolvency enquiries. Over the last few years businesses have

struggled with huge economic uncertainty, while temporary government support through the pandemic and in the energy crisis has allowed tough decisions to be put off. I expect to see a long-expected increase in insolvency work as businesses finally have to grapple with the 'new normal'. I also expect to see the courts examining thorny and novel issues arising from crypto- and digital asset related insolvency and fraud. It will be interesting to see how different courts approach questions of recognition and assistance to foreign courts and insolvency proceedings, when a cross-border consensus on questions such as situs of de-centralised assets has yet to be developed.

Q What has been your most memorable experience during your career so far?

A Obligations of confidentiality probably prevent me sharing some of the more memorable (and, certainly, most entertaining) experiences! One case that sticks in my mind from early in my career, was working on an appeal in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York in a Chapter 15 proceeding. The submissions were time limited to 10 minutes, with a traffic light system counting down. It was unlike anything I have seen in practising in English common law-derived legal systems. The legal teams had to be prepared to answer, without any thinking time, any question that the panel might raise in a case which turned on a complex and novel issues of law. My client had instructed a former Solicitor General of the USA, Paul Clement, and it was fascinating to watch how he prepared for and approached the hearing.

Q How do you deal with stress in your work life?

A I am very fortunate to have a supportive and nurturing environment at my firm – there are always colleagues who are on hand to bounce ideas back and forth and offer support when work is particularly stressful. But it's important to have a good balance between work and personal time and to find time to 'switch off' and recharge. I make sure that time is scheduled in my diary for non-work priorities.

Q What is your ideal holiday?

A I love to travel to places I have never experienced before – sampling new cuisine and meeting new people. But my ideal holiday is still spending time in Ireland, where my family have a home on the south east coast, in Waterford. Nothing beats a cliff top walk on a 'soft day'.

Q What was the last book you read?

A I joined a book club last year as part of an effort to read more fiction. However, most recently I have read Taste by Stanley Tucci – a mouth-watering culinary memoir. It should come with a warning not to read on an empty stomach!

Q Do you have a favourite food?

A The answer changes depending on my mood and the last great meal I ate (which is invariably not my own cooking)! Given that the Stanley Tucci's book is fresh in my mind, I will say: all things Italian.

Q What cause are you passionate about?

A I believe passionately in collective political action to deliver a fairer and more equal society. I joined the Labour party in my teens and have worked for the party at various times since as an intern, volunteer, activist and canvasser.

Q Do you have a New Year's Resolution, and if so, how do you plan to keep it?

A Having entered entirely speculatively, I unexpectedly won a place in this year's London Marathon through the ballot. Training for and (hopefully) finishing the marathon is my sole resolution. So far, I am sticking rigidly to my training plan, so fingers crossed!

Q What are you looking forward to in 2023?

A I will be an aunt for the fourth time this month – as my sister is expecting a little girl. I'm most looking forward to meeting my newest niece!