



**ARTIST Kevin Sharkey has pulled himself out of the race to become the next president of Ireland, labelling the whole process a "farce".**

The 57-year-old announced his decision to withdraw from the race this morning, saying he will instead focus his time on his new collection of paintings.

In a press release posted on Twitter, he requested that those who supported him transfer their votes to journalist Gemma O'Doherty "as she is a woman of huge integrity and is currently bravely shining a light on the rampant corruption that is destroying our beautiful country, and democracy, and she needs to be heard and listened to."

Mr Sharkey was yet to receive the backing of four county councils - a requirement for official candidacy - and described the process as so flawed you might as well "rip up the Constitution".

Amongst Mr Sharkey's plans were he to become president was to bring back the death penalty for attacks against elderly people in their homes.

He also criticised how motorways have cut off small rural towns and suggested opening Famine villages to draw tourists.

So far three people have received the required support of four local authorities to run in next month's Presidential Election.

Last week, Gavin Duffy became the third candidate to receive the support of local authorities to enter the race, joining fellow Dragons' Den investor Seán Gallagher and Senator Joan Freeman.

Mr Sharkey is the first potential candidate to withdraw from the race.

His new collection of paintings is entitled "The Presidential Collection 2018". He also said he intends to release a music single.