

Evening Echo

Linn Dubh, Assumption Road, Blackpool, Cork

Tel: 021 4272722 Fax: 021-4802135
 News: 0214802142 news@eecho.ie
 Sport: 021 4802228 esport@eecho.ie

Cork's evening newspaper since 1892

Cork needs a lot more funding

IT is of serious concern that the amount of money allocated to Cork under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund is so low.

As we reported recently, just €7 million of a pot of €100 million was allocated for key projects in Cork city and county.

Given the massive size and significant population, this is a poor outcome for a region which has been spoken about by the Taoiseach and ministers as strategically crucial for the future of the country. It marks the first in a series of allocations due in the coming years, so we must hope that the government will now move on to put its money where its mouth is, and do a lot more to facilitate this region becoming a real counterbalance to the ever-more-dominant Dublin and East coast area.

The successful projects in the city were the docklands and the Grand Parade Quarter, both of which are worthy grant recipients. The port of Cork has also secured funding for Tivoli docks.

However, nothing is being provided through the scheme for other projects for which City Hall had sought funding, including the development of the north-east orbital road, Marina Park and Tramore Valley Park.

Such is the level of concern about the lack of funding for Cork that City Council Chief Executive Ann Doherty was moved to express her disappointment. She complained about a lack of clarity as to what is being covered and in the case of Grand Parade Quarter, what parts are and are not being funded.

We must acknowledge the support Cork has got, but will hope that next year's round better reflects Cork's priority in the national Planning Framework.

Reds set up a tasty showdown

THE Munster rugby team gave us all something to cheer about over the weekend, and they have set up a tasty showdown for Thomond Park in Limerick this coming Saturday evening.

Their clash with English outfit Exeter will decide who goes through to the quarter-finals of the Heineken European Champions Cup.

A Saturday night do-or-die match at Thomond — this is the stuff of sporting legend. Munster were brilliant away to Gloucester last weekend. It was a performance full of the passion and the swashbuckling, driving play for which they are famous. Fans will travel from every corner of the province on Saturday — it's time to Stand Up And Fight!

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Ahead of the launch of The Food Institute at UCC on Friday, Professor Paul Ross, Head of the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science at UCC, talks about the importance of food research and education in Cork

IN Cork, there are two main topics of conversations — the weather, and food. Food is synonymous with Cork and remains one of the core areas of industry, education, research and social recreation for its people and visitors.

In University College Cork, where I am the Head of the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science (SEFS), we are proud of our strong identity as Ireland's Food University, with more than 25 undergraduate and postgraduate courses available to study.

These include our newest offerings for 2019, the bachelor's degree in Agricultural Science which will be delivered in collaboration with Teagasc, Moorepark Food Research Centre, and the postgraduate diploma in Irish Food Culture, led by noted food historian Regina Sexton. In addition, the Internationalization of the Food programme has included a new undergraduate Food Science degree specifically with Chinese academic partners for Chinese students. These new courses are in response to growing demand for fresh education and innovative learning across our food chain — which is under the spotlight now more than ever.

With increasing environmental challenges around our agricultural and food processing practices, it is vital that Ireland and Cork as a major food hub, take leadership in addressing these challenges in a way that caters for all populations, including producers and consumers. Cork has already taken steps to create a positive and more sustainable attitude toward food production and consumption through initiatives like the Cork Food Policy Council, which is chaired by UCC's Dr Colin Sage and which champions sustainable food behaviour in the region through its annual awards, which are currently accepting 2019 nominees. This growing positive attitude toward purchasing local produce can be seen at any of Cork's numerous Farmers' Markets which take place across the city and county on a weekly basis, and of course is evident in the home of Cork food, the English Market.

Against a background of "fake news" and conflicting arguments regarding nutrition, food origin and production practices, it can be a challenging time for consumers to make informed and educated choices about their food consumption and purchasing. Pressing topics such as food miles, water sustainability and the excessive use of plastic packaging materials are all areas of active interest for UCC researchers in the Cork University Business School (CUBS) and the Environmental Research Institute (ERI), who are delivering pioneering studies on reusing wastewater from dairy processing plants, to allow Ireland to reach sustainability targets while also improving the outputs of our commercial dairy sector.

This attitude of positively working toward a more holistic and sustainable food chain is echoed by a similarly positive approach to protecting our environment. UCC is noted worldwide as a beautiful campus, and this is supported by its green credentials, becoming the only Irish university to feature in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings top 10 in 2018, out of over 700 global universities.

As Ireland's most sustainable university, UCC has led the way in ensuring the protection of our Food chain through actions such as opening Ireland's first plastic-free café and even producing our own honey from bees protected and producing on university land. This has translated across to our students, with researcher-entrepreneur Dr Fiona Edwards-Murphy recently winning €1.5M in seed fund-

Cork, the Food Capital: UCC is at the heart



Head of the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science at UCC, Paul Ross.

ing to support her agri-tech business ApisProtect, which uses the internet of things to monitor and manage bee colonies.

This streak of innovation is evident across Cork's food chain and can even be seen in a different guise through the recent haul of Michelin stars across the county, with three stars awarded across restaurants Ichigo Ichie, the Mews and Chestnut. All of these restaurants have emphasised their roots in serving best local produce with a strong seasonal influence, and Cork diners have flocked to them in their droves to taste the innovative stylings and combinations provided.

This gastronomic success further translates across Cork food products, with over 53 Cork winners in the 2018 Blas na hEireann awards. UCC itself has a long legacy with Blas, which is the biggest blind tasting of produce in the country. The criteria on which the product is judged, as well as the judging system itself, was developed in partnership with the School of Food and Nutritional Sciences in UCC and is now recognised as an international industry standard.

Of course, after the production, purchase and consumption of food, there is another key step: digestion. UCC and Cork have long been established as true leaders in the field of microbiome science and digestive health as

home to APC Microbiome Ireland, the world's largest centre researching the microbiome, which is the community of micro-organisms living in the human body. I myself am the Deputy Director of the centre, which is ranked first in the world for probiotic and bacteriocin research and which has led to a number of successful national and international collaborations with academia and industry.

This breadth of activity, spanning across so many disciplines and areas of application, demonstrates the dynamic identity of Cork as a Food Capital, with UCC at the heart of providing knowledge to support and empower communities to reflect on the importance of our food system.

For us in the university, now more than ever, our research in food, nutrition and the environment is of critical importance and this has been reflected in the creation of our newest research unit, the Food Institute UCC, which will be officially launched by Minister Michael Creed on Friday January 18 next and which is led by director, Jim Corbett. With over 250 staff working and supporting food-related research and education across the Food Institute, the centre will provide single-point access to all the food resources of UCC.

With direct graduate employment from food-related degrees at over 88%, UCC offers the widest and best pool of talent and knowledge for the entire agri-food sector with Cork, the Food Capital, at its heart.