

Impressive €25 million study extension unveiled by WIT



WIT Director Prof Kieran R Byrne giving a tour of the Institute's new tourism and leisure studies building to local journalists last week. | PHOTO: DYLAN VAUGHAN

WIT's new €25 million tourism and leisure studies building on the Cork Road campus was officially unveiled last week, bringing capital investment at the Institute over the past seven years beyond the €70 million mark.

The 82,882 square feet building is positioned at the western end of the campus and will accommodate 50 staff and 1,050 students pursuing courses in the increasingly important services sector.

The new facility will also be available for languages, recreation and leisure students with teaching areas, lecture theatres, lecture rooms, computer and language laboratories, support areas and staff accommodation all provided for in the design.

Welcoming the building's completion, WIT Director Kieran R Byrne said it marked the latest landmark in the Institute's ambitious capital investment programme, which has been supported through consecutive National Development Plans.

"The facilities that this latest expansion provides us with will allow us extend on existing provision and develop greater research specialisations in areas as diverse as culinary arts and food sciences which dovetail well with the strengths of the south east region," he said.

Prof Byrne added that the new building will also greatly enhance services on offer to both students and staff and facilitate the provision of programmes to strengthen Ireland's economic performance in the tourism, hospitality and leisure sector.

"In the south east and countrywide, this is an important sector through which the region earns considerable foreign and domestic revenue," he stated.

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and add further to the prestigious reputation that has already been won at national and international level. This, in turn, will allow us attract and retain further high-calibre students and staff in the future."

Professor Byrne continued: "Waterford will now be further strengthened as an internationally-recognised centre with specialist capabilities in tourism, hospitality and leisure studies. This new facility will also support an increase in our international student population in the south east."

The building handover was also attended by John McConnell on the day that he retired as WIT's Head of Physical Development after 35 years of service to the Institute.

"This building represents the largest single capital project the Institute has undertaken and will accommodate a variety of purposes and flexible uses," he said.

"As it is being completed, I want to pay tribute to the entire project team within the Institute and our various professional advisors and contractors for their work in bringing it to completion in the less than two years since we had the announcement of funding for the project in late May 2006."

Meanwhile, Prof Byrne travelled to the Middle East on Friday last as part of WIT's latest international recruiting drive.

With approximately 70 students from the region due to commence studies in Waterford next year, it is hoped that greater numbers from the Middle East will choose WIT in the years to come.