

"Smart City" Dream



Thinking big: Tech Mahindra's Aashish Washikar.

Tech Mahindra and TSSG alliance could create Waterford digital hub

A potential link-up between Butlerstown-based IT company Tech Mahindra and WIT's telecommunications wing could lead to the creation of a 'Smart City' digital business roll-out in Waterford.

Waterford would be the ideal sized urban centre for an initiative which one of the city's newest commercial arrivals is currently developing for the English city of Milton Keynes.

The suggestion for a Waterford project was floated to The Munster Express by WIT Professor Willie Donnelly (Head of the Telecommunications Software and Systems Group - TSSG) and ties into the Indian company's commitment to work with WIT while also expanding its local workforce.

"We already have a critical mass in Waterford when it comes to mobile services," said Professor Donnelly, which is clearly the case when one considers the businesses at the TSSG, Eishtec, Rigney Dolphin and Tech Mahindra, who are in partnership with Three in Butlerstown.

"And if we were to target this sector, which is entirely achievable given the professional and researched-based expertise at our disposal in Waterford, there's no reason why such a project could not create jobs, sustainable and succeed."

Speaking to this newspaper from India, Tech Mahindra's Aashish Washikar, echoed Prof Donnelly's sentiments, stating that his company would be "more than happy to achieve such an objective in Waterford".

He added: "With the co-operation of central and local government, along with other businesses in the region, such a development is entirely achievable".

Regarding Milton Keynes, Mr Washikar said, it's envisaged that 2,000 new jobs can be created via the project it will soon enter into with the Open University, with its new Waterford office set to support the cross-channel venture.

The company, which is currently employing 130 staff in Butlerstown as part of a 95,000-strong global workforce, has already declared its hopes to have 300 staff on its books here within 12 months.

WIT's ability to retain well-financed Chinese students for many of its postgraduate programmes, in addition to the €1 million in fees the college has secured through enticing students from China, could also benefit through such an initiative.

And given that WIT's current Chinese student base spends a further €800,000 per year in the local economy (via cost of living), the logic in developing a digital smart city in Waterford appears sound.

On February 7th, Three Ireland opened its new customer service centre at Butlerstown, for which Tech Mahindra is providing customer care support.

Tech Mahindra has established a Waterford base "with the vision to strategically position presence in Ireland with a prime focus on the telecommunications, financial services, energy, utilities and pharmaceutical sectors. The company plans to leverage the skills and talent pool available in Ireland to grow its business across these sectors in the region".

According to Tech Mahindra's Sujit Bakshi: "This deal with Three Ireland is strategically placed to help us grow market share in Ireland, servicing not only Irish customers but enabling its global partners and customers to see the value of this Centre, its growth potential and the value which this location will bring."

By 2020, it's been estimated that the 'smart city' industry will be worth \$400 billion globally, meaning Waterford will surely be keen to take its share of an IT integration business that could create considerable business and academic employment.