

Drones May Provide Regional Jobs Boost

The South East of Ireland could create a range of jobs through drone technology with PWC predicting that two per cent of the State's labour force may be engaged in drone-related activities by 2030.

This could account for between 30,000 to 40,000 jobs nationally, according to Gerry Sweetman of PWC Accountants, who addressed the topic during a seminar at Mount Juliet Hotel. There's a prospect that WIT could play a regional role in developing drone technology for economic reasons given that there are already third level courses in place in the UK.



A shot of The Quay as photographed via a drone.

And there may well be opportunities for videographers, technical engineers and data scientists.

Drones are already widely in use by the emergency services, farmers, road builders, on construction sites, by oil and gas companies, for shipping repairs and building inspection for tall buildings and structures such as wind turbines. Survey mapping is a major consideration for local authorities who could use drones for environmental monitoring. The ESB and other power companies would need to monitor lines for faults and other problems over land and drones could assist in this work.

On the sports front, athletes and their coaches use drones for training over long distances, such as cross country races and marathons. Real estate agents also use them and one such local drone user in Waterford is Thomas Grace, whose father runs the Halley Grace agency on Arundel Square. It is a good way of valuing farms and clients can see the topography. They're also useful for maintenance on high buildings.

An issue, however, is licensing, Thomas Grace has passed those IAA drone exams and will be licensed and is one of the few in Waterford area to have such certification. He also works for other various Waterford agents and does general video promotional work with drones and general camera. It's worth noting that five days notice is required to fly a drone within four to five kilometres of Waterford Airport. It's believed that WIT is looking into the drone technology, to see if any courses can be considered with this technology in mind. However, it does take time to organise a course and get department approval