

# The Sunday Business Post

## Esri releases mapping software to schools



Joanne McLaughlin, ArcGIS for Schools Sponsor, Esri Ireland, with St Kevin's College Finglas students Casey Farren Collyty and Nathan Furlong

● Mapping technology business Esri Ireland has made its ArcGIS tool available free to all schools in Ireland.

The global ArcGIS for Schools initiative is making the firm's online mapping platform available to every primary and post-primary school in Ireland.

The national roll-out comes following software trials that began with 12 schools in April. Esri has been training geography teachers outside of the pilot programme on the tool since June and has partnered with the Ordnance Survey and Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland to assist teachers.

"It's a cloud-based platform, it can be accessed anywhere, anytime, on any device. Beyond the software donation, we're making lesson plans aligned with the curriculum to help get teachers up and running," said Joanne McLaughlin, ArcGIS for schools sponsor and head of marketing at Esri Ireland.

"It's our job to make life easier for the teachers. We've had workshops and information sessions with them to give them step-by-step guides on what to do with

the technology."

The motivation to provide the service to schools is rooted in the goals of the company's founder, Jack Dangermond, according to McLoughlin.

"His vision was to put the technology in the hands of future generations. He does a lot of work around donations to conservation societies and humanitarian disaster relief. He's very committed to giving back to society and that's flowed down through the

company," she said.

ArcGIS is a platform to enable analysis of location and geography, it's wholly interactive and is designed to help users have a better idea of the influence of a location.

"It's a much more visual way of looking at information. You can analyse what's there and make a decision based on that," said McLoughlin.

"We're trying to use the communities that are already there to get the message out and get this into as many schools as possible."

Esri had 50 schools spread nationwide using it from launch day, which was last Thursday, and is aiming to

have 200 signed up by the end of the school year. Esri aims to reach all schools on the island within the next decade.

Paul Synnott, director and country manager of Esri Ireland, said in addition to helping the schools, the interactive nature of the tool could help boost the number of students looking at STEM careers down the line.

"Across the EU there is an issue with digital skills. It's not that new," he said.