

UCC LECTURE ZOOMS IN ON DEMOCRACY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The lack of gender quota legislation in local government, the role of a Directly Elected Mayor in providing greater democratic accountability, and the need to attract more young people into local government were the main issues on the agenda at the Sixth Annual Public Lecture Series, organised by UCC's Centre for Local and Regional Governance.

New Forms of Democratic Local Government' was the theme of the Sixth Annual Public Lecture Series, organised by UCC's Centre for Local and Regional Governance (CLRG). This year's event, which took place online on 15 April, was opened by Dr Theresa Reidy, Head of UCC's Department of Government and Politics.

Dr Aodh Quinlivan, Director of the CLRG, gave an overview of the centre's achievements in 2020, including the publication of 'Forgotten Lord Mayor' and the successful 'Lunch and Learn' seminars for Cork City Council staff members at City Hall.

He also announced that UCC's first year student, Conor Ruth, was the winner of the CLRG's Annual Under-Graduate Student Essay award, while the 2021 Local Government Recognition award went to John Ger O'Riordan, whom Dr Quinlivan noted "has given more than 43 years of dedicated service to Cork City Council".

On launching the CLRG's Annual



Participating in the webinar of the Sixth Annual Public Lecture Series, organised by UCC's Centre for Local and Regional Governance (CLRG) on 15 April were Prof John Cryan, John Moran, Dr Aodh Quinlivan, Jackie Weaver, Dublin's Lord Mayor Hazel Chu and Dr Theresa Reidy.

Report for 2020, UCC's Vice-President for Research and Innovation, Prof John Cryan, described the centre as a "role model" within the university.

GENDER QUOTA LEGISLATION
On delivering the first presentation of the Sixth Annual Public Lecture Series, Dublin's Lord Mayor Hazel Chu called for enhanced powers for local government and a broadening of the representational base.

During her wide-ranging talk, Cllr

Chu noted that she was only the ninth woman to be elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, and she queried why the gender quota legislation introduced in 2012 did not extend to local government.

John Moran, former Secretary General in the Department of Finance, and now an advocate for a Directly Elected Mayor (DEM) in Limerick, outlined his hopes for the creation of this new role.

He argued that while a Directly Elected Mayor provides for greater

democratic accountability, “the creation of the role must come with a transfer of powers and budget”. Moran criticised Ireland’s centralised system of government and the tendency for the centre to “micro-manage” the local level.

“When I was Secretary General in the Department of Finance, I probably loved the idea of control but, seeing it from the other side, you realise how inappropriate it is,” he noted.

UK LOCAL GOVERNMENT MODEL

Jackie Weaver, Chief Officer of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils, who presented the final lecture of the evening, became somewhat of an internet sensation last December due to what was reported as “a boisterous meeting” of Handforth Parish Council.

Footage of the meeting went viral after Weaver removed some parish council members who had lost their cool off the Zoom call. Due to his behaviour at the meeting, the Mayor of Cheshire East Council, Barry Burkhill, was referred to the council’s Standards Committee.

She stated that local government in the UK suffers under the weight of centralisation, just like in Ireland. Weaver then turned her attention to attracting more young people into local government.

GREATER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

“We have struggled to get young people between the ages of 18-25 involved and interested in local government. We have established youth parliaments and youth councils, but are they actually representative of the youth in the community?”

“With hand on heart, I think we would find it hard to say, ‘yes, they are’. We have a long way to go, but over the last few months there has been an increased engagement with young people. Much of my time now is spent speaking in universities, colleges, and schools. Students are interested in local democracy and their local councils. That is the way forward.”

After a lively Q&A session, the closing remarks were delivered by the Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Joe Kavanagh. He complimented the speakers on their presentations and praised the contribution that the CLRG is making in raising awareness about sub-national government at home and abroad.

Log into <https://bit.ly/32DVSg0> and use passcode **^Fd3IV\$w** to view the online CLRG Sixth Public Lecture.



‘LUNCH AND LEARN’ SEMINARS SET TO CONTINUE THIS YEAR

UCC’s Centre for Local and Regional Governance (CLRG) is expanding its ‘Lunch and Learn’ CPD series of seminars for staff members in Cork’s City Hall this year, following the success of the inaugural seminars in 2020.

“In January last year we started the ‘Lunch and Learn’ CPD seminar series for Cork City Council staff members in City Hall, to cover topics in relation to local government, public sector management and political systems both at home and abroad,” according to Dr Aodh Quinlivan, Director of the CLRG.

“We ran the ‘Lunch and Learn’ seminars as a pilot programme and expected maybe 20 people to attend, but across the eight-week series, an average of 70-80 people attended each seminar. The feedback was really positive and, with the support of Adult and Continuing Education in UCC, we produced Certificates of Attendance for all participants.”

Dr Quinlivan said that the ‘Lunch and Learn’ seminars will now be expanded this year, starting with a series in May and June, with follow-ups in October and November and “we hope that participants will earn a digital badge from UCC”.

For further information on ‘Lunch and Learn’ seminars email a.quinlivan@ucc.ie



For further information and updates visit:
<https://www.ucc.ie/en/government-and-politics/centreforlocalandregionalgovernance/>

REMIT OF UCC’S CENTRE FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Based within UCC’s Department of Government and Politics, the Centre for Local and Regional Governance (CLRG) was officially launched in February 2016, with a remit to foster innovative research in the areas of local and regional governance.

The research initiatives of the centre help to open constructive dialogues about sub-national government at home and abroad and to drive change at the level of local and regional government.

The CLRG also provides a platform where a wide variety of stakeholders including politicians, practitioners, business interests, civic society and academics can collaborate on innovative research projects.