

US investment hopes for North West

A leading Irish American politician has spoken of the enormous opportunities in the North West for US investors.

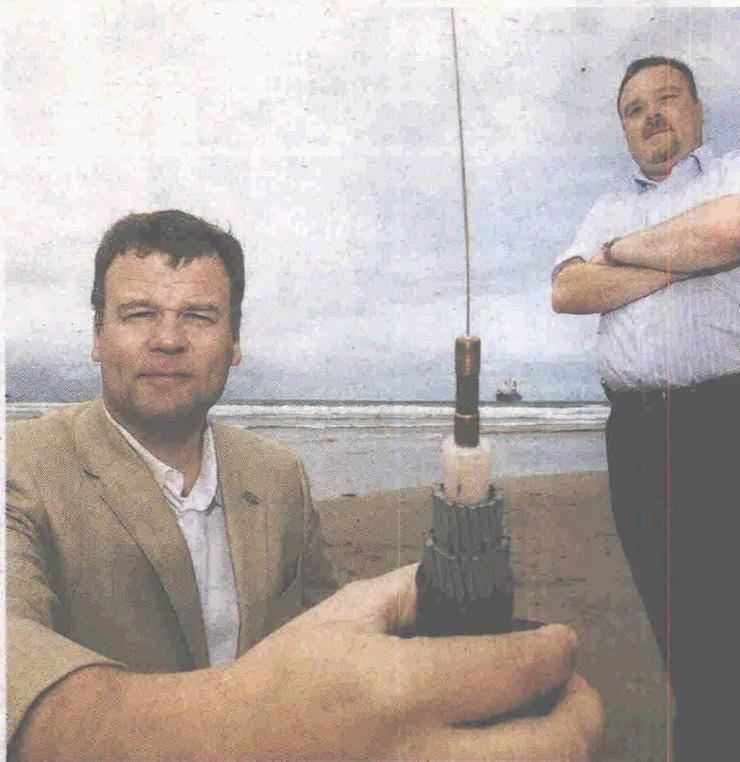
Congressman Richard E Neal, chairman of the Friends of Ireland in the US House of Representatives, said the potential now existed for both commercial relationships between America and the North West but also for major academic link ups.

Speaking at the Gateways to Tomorrow conference in Boston last month - at which business and civic leaders from Derry put forward the case for investment in the region - Congressman Neal said: "I have no doubt that American companies will find enormous opportunities in the North West of Ireland.

"Similarly, our world-class universities in Massachusetts look forward to creating mutually beneficial alliances with the University of Ulster at Magee, Derry."

The conference, which was attended by Regional Development Minister Conor Murphy and Derry City Council chief executive Valerie Watts, was organised by Derry businessman Garvan O'Doherty.

Mr O'Doherty said the conference



Pictured at West Strand Beach in Portrush when the first fibre optic cable landed in Northern Ireland, directly connecting Northern Ireland to North America, are Bjarni Thorvardarson (CEO of Hibernia Atlantic), left, and Derek Bullock (Vice President of Network Operations).



aimed to allow Derry to build on its historical links with the US.

"To build Derry's economy we must create and strengthen our international links. Given the close historic connections that Derry has with the US - and particularly Boston and Massachusetts - it is only natural that this link is particularly important for us."

Among the keynote speakers at the conference were Bjarni Thorvardarson, chief executive of Hibernia Atlantic, the company behind Project Kelvin.

Derry will house the Project's telehouse facility - a central component to the £30million pound transatlantic telecommunications project.

"The building of the telehouse in Derry is not merely an important physical connection, it is also significant as a symbol for how Derry can benefit from working with the US." Mr O'Doherty said.

"Business and civic leaders in Derry, Boston and Massachusetts have committed to this conference and in doing so we are expressing our determination that we will extend the commercial links across the continents and through this will improve Derry for all its citizens."