

GO TO POLAND?

By CLODAGH O'LEARY

OVER 3,000 staff at Dell in Limerick face an agonising wait as an official announcement on an expansion into Eastern Europe will not be made until this October, the Limerick Leader can exclusively reveal.

Speculation is rife that the Limerick-based plant could be downsized or even closed if the company begins mass production of laptop computers in another European site.

And it has been reported in the national and Polish media this week that the Polish city of Lodz is Dell's chosen location for their second manufacturing plant.

It is estimated that 12,000 in-house and sub-contractor jobs will be created through a €120m investment.

The Polish newspaper, Gazeta Wyborcza, reported that Dell was attracted to the city because of a large student population and low labour costs. The average industrial wage in Poland is €677 a month.

The Limerick base is currently the sole supplier to customers in EMEA—Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

It is estimated that about 8,000 jobs in the Limerick region would be effected by a Dell closure.

A spokeswoman for Dell told the Limerick Leader this Wednesday that no official decision had been announced by the company yet.

"We hope to make a decision on the second facility at the

end of this quarter," the spokeswoman said.

"We have been seeking to set up an operation in central Europe for some time now, but no announcement has been made to the media as of yet," the spokeswoman added.

"We envisage that the new facility will considerably complement Limerick's operation," she said.

Dell have had a turbulent time of late. Dell's shares hit a five year low earlier last month, and its share prices have fallen by more than 50 per cent over the past 12 months.

Two weeks ago, Dell recalled 4.1 million laptop batteries made by Sony, which it is estimated will cost the company hundreds of millions.

A senior member of Dell management told the Limerick Leader that they have been assured by Head Office in America that operations here would not be downsized.

But one local employee responding to the comment said: "What else would they say?"

Hefty halibut tips Rene Cusack's scales at 100 kilos

By AINE FITZGERALD

THERE was no fear of a re-enactment of the biblical story of the loaves and fishes this week after a giant flatfish arrived in the city capable of feeding 400 hungry "soles".

The 100kg Halibut was caught off Castletownbere on Monday evening and arrived in Limerick yesterday morning after being bought at auction.

"It was spotted on the floor at the auction and we decided to take it because it is a very popular dish," explained Paul Cusack, owner of Rene Cusack's on Alphonsus Street, where the fish is resting on ice.

And already the Hippoglossus Hippoglossus, as it is scientifically known, is attracting second glances from customers.

"My first impression was—wow, what a stunning fish," said local man Tom Kenny when he entered the shop.

"It's certainly not what you would expect to see when you walk in for your two salmon steaks," he added.

Another customer gasped: "Oh, he's a big fella—isn't he," when she called in to buy her weekly supply of fish.

The Atlantic Halibut is by far the largest flatfish found around these islands or anywhere.

"Ireland is the southern extremity of their breeding ground so you would not find many further south," explained Mr Cusack.

The largest ever Atlantic Halibut recorded was caught and landed at Stamsund, Lofoten, Norway this year.

This massive fish weighed 282 kg and its total length was 262 cm.

Weighing in at approximately 100kg, Limerick's hefty Atlantic Halibut stretches to approximately 6 foot in length, it takes three strong men to lift it and it has a retail value of approximately €3,000.

The people of Limerick will now get the opportunity to sink their teeth into a chunk of the tasty treasure as it is currently being cut up for sale in Rene Cusack's.

"We estimate that we will get around 400 portions out of the fish and when it's all gone we will have another large replacement—big but not as big," said Mr Cusack.



Donie O'Brien, Rene Cusack, Peter Cusack and Paul Klimek with the 100kg Halibut

Picture: ADRIAN BUTLER (LL)

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