

THE IRISH TIMES

Lighting up the night sky to mark EU growth

DEAGLÁN DE BRÉADÚN

Dubliners and others who may be planning to get "lit up" with a few drinks during the May Day celebrations for European enlargement can now do some lighting-up of a different kind.

Thanks to the ingenuity of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, who describes himself as "an interactive artist", the night sky over the capital will be ablaze with the beams from 22 automatic or "robotic" spotlights, strategically located around the city centre.

It's called "Vectorial Elevation" and, from tomorrow night until May 3rd, anyone with access to the internet will be able to design a lighting pattern and write a personal message by linking up with Mr Lozano-Hemmer's cunningly designed system.

It's been tried before, in Mexico City, Vitoria-Gasteiz in the Basque country and the French city of Lyons. Even if you haven't got your own computer, there will be access points in

O'Connell Street you can use. The website is www.dublinelevation.net and you can start playing on it right away.

Anyone in Slovenia or San Francisco can also come up with a design and write a message. It will only flash in the sky for 10 seconds but, in other cities, people have used it as an unorthodox method of proposing marriage.

Mr Lozano-Hemmer, a Mexican-Canadian who has just taken out Spanish nationality, said there would be no censorship.

He says the lighting designs will be visible at a distance of 15 kilometres.

He is a little concerned that our air quality may be too good, unlike the pollution in Mexico City, which acted as a perfect screen for displaying the lighting designs.

He knows that smoky coal was banned from Dublin some years ago and our more recent restrictions on cigarette-smoking don't

help either, in this context. Our air is too clean. He needs low-lying clouds and, if possible, some rainfall.

The show is sponsored by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism as part of the celebrations for the accession of ten new member-States to the European Union.

The system will operate from dusk to dawn, or about 9.30 p.m. to 6 a.m. and some 4,000 patterns a night can be accommodated. Individual contributors will be named on a screen at the James Larkin statue.