



Tánaiste: Ireland-France ties to deepen

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The Government is working to deepen ties with France post-Brexit, the Tánaiste said yesterday as he helped launch the 30th Cork French Film Festival.

It is preparing an Ireland-France strategy to cement and develop the relationship with what will be our nearest EU neighbour when Britain leaves on March 29, said Simon Coveney.

And Cork French Film Festival, which this year includes themes of unity, triumph over adversity, and love and has as its overall theme “Ensemble (Together)”, reinforces from a cultural point of view the existing connections and friendships between the two countries, he said.

The French Ambassador in Ireland, Stéphane Crouzat, said there is an incredible affinity between France and Ireland dating back centuries.

“And now in this new context, it’s all the more important to make the most of this special relationship that we have,” he said.

Cork, which is twinned with Rennes, last week hosted a delegation from Rennes university, which signed a memorandum of understanding with UCC.

“I hope that will translate not just into academia but

also into cultural events,” said Mr Crouzat.

They were speaking at the official launch of this year’s Cork French Film Festival programme, organised by Alliance Française, which will see 20 films screened from March 3 to March 10. Combined, the films have 40 nominations for the 2019 Cesar Awards, the French version of the Oscars.

French beatmaker, producer, and DJ Jean du Voyage will perform at the opening night gala at St Peter’s.

The opening night film is *Sink Or Swim (Le Grand Bain)*, one of this year’s box-office hits in France, which tells the humorous story of the adventures of an all-male synchronised swimming team in existential crisis.

The closing film is a newly restored print of the original classic, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, starring Gérard Depardieu as a romantic poet cursed by an impossibly large nose.

As well as workshops with famous French actors, directors, and DJs, there will be a number of food events and a focus on environmental issues in partnership with the Cork Environmental Forum.

Lord Mayor, Cllr Mick Finn, said the festival has become a huge part of the diverse local cultural scene and has brought the best of French cinema to the city for the past 30 years.

“I would like to acknowledge the work of Alliance Française de Cork which strives to bring the very best of French cinema to Cork each year and which has contributed to the development of Franco-Irish relations since 1946,” he said.

Jean-Christophe Trentinella, director of Alliance Française de Cork, said it hopes this year’s programme will appeal to people of all ages. “Some of the films might be difficult, with themes such as unemployment and social struggles, because these films give us a glimpse in other people’s lives, their hopes and their challenges. There will be comedies, of course, as well as family movies and classics,” he said.

The movies will be shown at The Gate cinema. The programme for the festival has

been curated by guest festival programmer, Marie-Pierre Richard.



Jean-Christophe Trentinella, director, Alliance Française de Cork; Tánaiste Simon Coveney; Prof Grace Neville, vice president, Alliance Française board; Stéphane Crouzat, French Ambassador, at the 30th Cork French Film Festival programme launch. Picture: Clare Keogh