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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FEDERATION

JANUARY 2021



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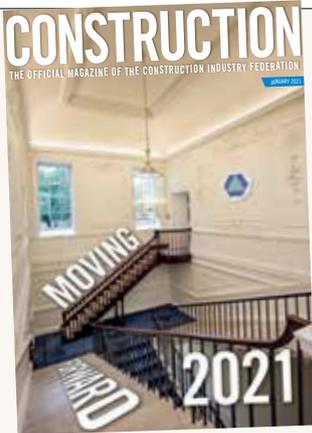
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EDITORIAL



The 'Outlook 2020' issue of *Construction* magazine from this time last year reveals a construction sector that was brimming with confidence and entering 2020 with great expectations. Then on 31st December, news started to break from China that health officials were investigating the cause of a pneumonia outbreak in the city of Wuhan. By late February, coronavirus had reached Europe. The first case in Ireland was diagnosed on 29th February.

By the time Ireland went into full lockdown on 27th March, the CIF Safety, Health and Welfare sub-Committee had already set up a Covid-19 Working Group comprising leading construction health and safety experts.

The result of their work was the now ubiquitous 'Construction Sector C19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedure' (SOP), first published on 14th April.

The SOP meant that by the time the first lockdown ended on 4th May, construction was one of the first sectors to swing back into action.

As the Irish construction sector looks to 2021, there are many new challenges, particularly for SMEs and small family businesses. But looking through this issue

of *Construction*, there is a renewed confidence to be seen. Bolstered maybe by the overwhelming achievements of 2020, there is an appetite to take on the opportunities and challenges that the year ahead may bring.

In this issue of *Construction*, we speak with outgoing CIF President Pat Lucey about the highlights of his tenure and meet incoming President Frank Kelly to discuss his ambitions for the coming two years. We analyse what may happen in the various sectors in the coming 12 months, including in the field of Modern Methods of Construction. We visit Duggan Brothers' impressive restoration of

Leinster House. Our Member Focus section features a pioneering contractor operating in the field of siphonic rainwater drainage, and a west of Ireland family-run business that played a central role in the development of a coastal defence system around Calais Harbour in France.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of *Construction* and wish you a most successful year in 2021. **C**

Robbie Cousins, Editor



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CIF NEWS

OUR COLLABORATIVE SUCCESSSES IN 2020 GIVE A REAL SENSE OF WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE TOGETHER IN THE YEARS AHEAD

A message from CIF Director General Tom Parlon

Without a doubt, 2020 was a landmark year for Irish construction. Together we addressed the most formidable challenges, changed how we do our business, and led the way in learning how to live and work with Covid-19. We go into 2021 with a great sense of purpose and determination. We must take the lessons learned in 2020 and continue taking a collaborative approach to address the many challenges we will face in the year ahead.

I commend the members of the Health, Safety and Welfare sub-Committee and the Covid-19 Working Group who developed the 'Construction Sector C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedure' for their commitment and outstanding work. We observed a new generation of construction leaders emerge in 2020, and I am excited about the prospects of the industry under their leadership in the years ahead.

A little later than planned, we launched our 'A Home For Everyone' schools' competition. This competition challenges our young people to design a home that helps solve climate change, the housing crisis and addresses inclusivity. I call on all members from across the country and from all disciplines to be part of this exciting initiative and engage directly with young people in your local schools and communities to show them the broad range of opportunities a career on construction can offer them.

While we have made great strides in recent years in terms of site safety, 2020 sadly was a year when there was an increase in the number of fatalities in the sector.

Now that we have robust Covid-19 measures in place, we must refocus our efforts on addressing workplace hazards, particularly falls from height and working with mobile plant. As we start the new year, I call on all members to review your safety practices and to take action where needed to ensure the safety of our



Tom Parlon,
Director General, CIF.

workforce.

The mental wellbeing of the industry's workforce, particularly in this past year, has been of major concern. The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity has a 24/7 helpline and a wellbeing app that are available to our workforce. I encourage all of our members to promote this service on your sites and to support the work of the Lighthouse Club in whatever way that you can.

I commend you and your workers for the responding so positively to the Covid-19 pandemic and standing together

to overcome the many difficulties we have faced in 2020 and will continue to face in the year ahead.

We close 2020 in a position we could not have imagined 12 months ago. But we move forward into 2021 together and confident that we can overcome the challenges we meet in the year ahead. **C**

I wish you a healthy and prosperous 2021.

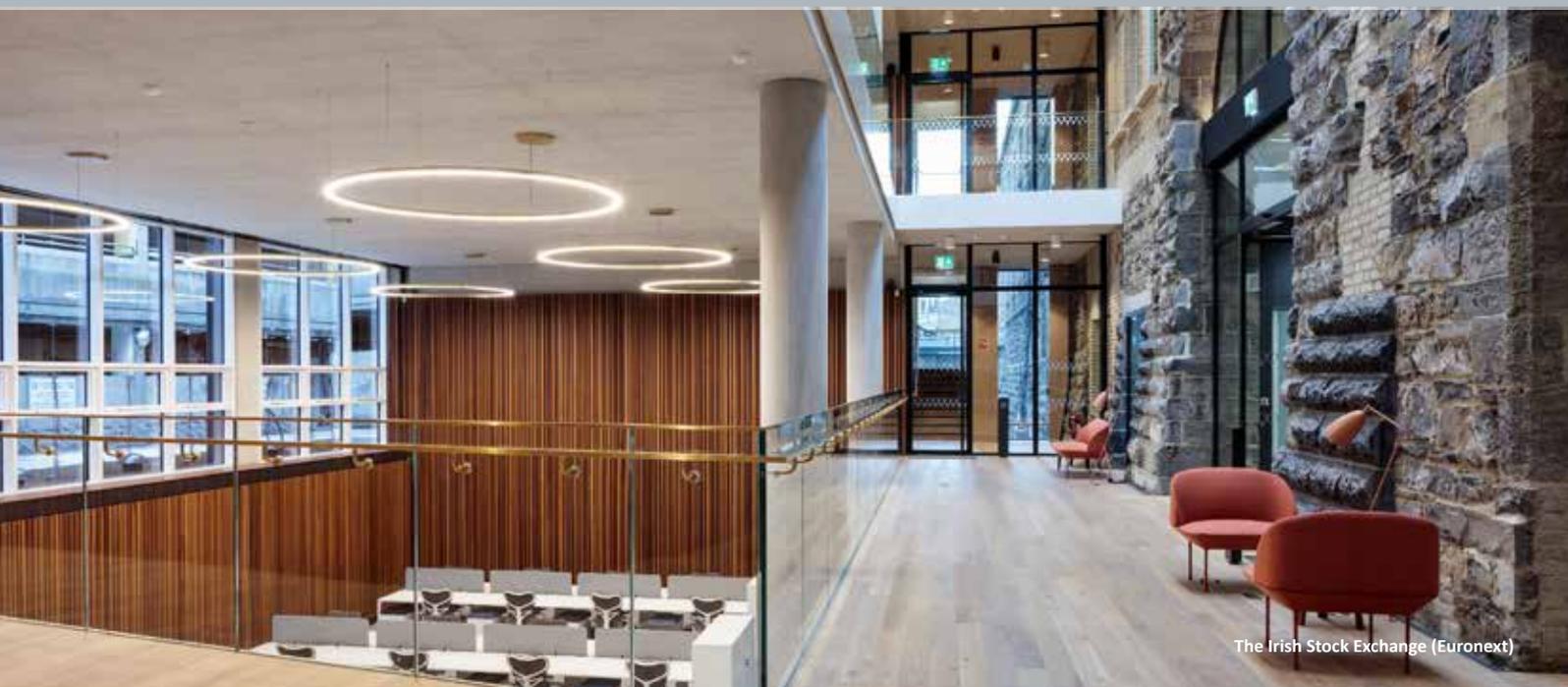
*Stay safe,
Tom Parlon*



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NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UNDER REVIEW AND HAS SPENDING ENVELOPE EXTENDED TO 2030

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath TD has launched 'Review to Renew' – the review of the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP) sets out a 10-year programme of capital investment aimed at upgrading Ireland's infrastructure, enhancing economic capacity and promoting balanced regional development. It is a pillar of 'Project Ireland 2040', alongside the National Planning Framework (NPF), and sets the overarching spatial strategy for the next 20 years.

Speaking at the launch of 'Review to Renew' – the review of the National Development Plan 2018-2027, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath TD said, "This review of the NDP provides an opportunity to ensure delivery of more infrastructure to more people, including public transport, broadband, housing and a broad range of social, cultural and community services.

"Led by the National Investment Office in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), the review will also ensure alignment between the NDP and the priorities identified in the Programme for Government (PfG), including climate action, housing policy, transport policy and balanced regional development."

PROJECT COMPLETIONS

Since the launch of Project Ireland 2040, a range of both large and small infrastructure projects have been completed. These include the M11 Gorey to Enniscorthy and the N25 New Ross Bypass), two new acute ward blocks in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda and Waterford University Hospital; and the upgrading of wastewater treatment plants at Mohill, Athenry, Castleblaney, Enniscorthy, Manorhamilton, Ardee, Grange, Tubbercurry and Ballinacorney.

The Minister said there has also been progress made in planning for major projects such as Bus Connects, DART Expansion, Metrolink and the M20 Cork to Limerick.

Minister McGrath added that in light of the PfG and the challenges of Covid-19, it is the Government's view that it is now prudent to reassess investment plans, update project costings and highlight any new issues that need to be taken into consideration in the NDP and any plans that need to be addressed.

"The review will be carried out in close partnership with all other Government departments and State agencies, and will include a really strong element of stakeholder engagement and public communication."

Review to Renew will seek to analyse the following five areas:

- Assessment of the economic and social case for the overall level of capital expenditure
- The appropriate share of expenditure across departments and sectors
- The alignment of policy priorities with the PfG, in particular in the areas of housing, climate action, transport, job creation and enterprise development
- If the NDP aligns sufficiently with the special strategy set out in the NPF
- Whether appropriate structures and rules for the management and oversight of projects are in place.

PUBLIC SPENDING CODE UPDATE

Speaking at the launch of Review to Renew, Minister of State for



Michael McGrath TD, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Public Procurement and eGovernment, Ossian Smyth TD said, "All of the evidence shows that the greatest impact on improving project outcomes comes from careful project preparation. The recent update to the public spending code strengthens existing guidance, to better reflect the realities of project delivery, with a particular focus on financial appraisal, cost estimation and risk management. Rigorous application of the updated code is supporting public bodies in gaining a more developed view of costs, risks and timeframes before committing to a project."

CIF CONCERNS

Shane Dempsey, Director, Communications, CIF, comments, "A key challenge for the State is to reform its procurement processes and evolve its contract. At the moment, both militate against collaboration, delivery and invocation. Ultimately, the citizen and the taxpayer suffer due to these approaches. To get the optimum, they need to put in place procurement and a legal framework like NEC to allow the industry to deliver. There is excellent work ongoing in the Office of Public Procurement (OGP) and within the construction sector group, but this needs to be accelerated and public sector bodies need to be supported in adopting more modern practices."

Minister McGrath invited all stakeholders and interested parties to visit www.gov.ie/2040 to view the NDP documents, and he encouraged people to take this opportunity to contribute their views. The result of the review will be published in Spring 2021, followed by the publication of a revised 10-year NDP with an investment envelope from 2020 to 2030.

The closing date for submissions is 29th January 2021. **C**



Plant and people segregation on a JJ Rhatigan and Company site.

COVID-19 FAILS TO DAMPEN CONSTRUCTION SAFETY WEEK 2020 ENGAGEMENT

CIF members across the country made Construction Safety Week 2020 a huge success while following Covid-19 guidelines.

CIF Construction Safety Week 2020, from Monday 19th October to Friday 23rd October, continued the tradition of engaging CIF members across the country to work together to highlight on-site safety.

Activities included socially-distanced toolbox talks by Rory O'Connor of "Rory's Stories" fame, and talks by speakers from Pieta House and Aware; a demonstration of a high line crane rescue by Dublin Fire Brigade; a Zoom presentation by Kilkenny hurling manager Brian Cody to John Paul Construction staff; and virtual wellness sessions; all highlighting the safety agenda across the week. Many of these activities were shared across social media platforms using the hashtag #CIFSafety20.



Kirby Group Engineering welcomed CIF Health & Safety Ambassador Rory O'Connor to one of its sites for a talk on mental wellbeing.

DAILY THEMES

Construction Safety Week is an initiative of the Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (CSPAC), whose members include the HSA, CIF, trade

unions and key industry stakeholders.

The daily themes for Construction Safety Week 2020 were:

- Monday 19th October: Mental Health, Welfare and Wellbeing in Construction
- Tuesday 20th October: Plant and



John Sisk and Son workers mark Construction Safety Week 2020 on its Cherrywood site in Dublin.



Crane stretcher rescue drill being carried out at BAM Ireland's Brewery Quarter site, Cork.



Carey Building Contractors' site for the new ambulance base site at Merlin Park Hospital, Galway. L to r: Noel Murphy, Site Manager, Carey Building Contractors; Loretta Kirrane, H&S Manager, Carey Building Contractors; Justin Molloy, Director, Western & Midland Region, CIF; and Richard O'Toole, Site Engineer, Carey Building Contractors.

- Pedestrian Safety
- Wednesday 21st October: Occupational Health in Construction
- Thursday 22nd October: Working Safely at Height
- Friday 23rd October: Emergency Preparedness.

Day 1 of Construction Safety Week was marked with the annual 'Stand Down for Safety' minute's silence on sites across the country as workers remembered colleagues who had died in accidents while carrying out their duties.

ENGAGEMENT

Key performance indicators of online engagement included the following:

- 2.56 million impressions across social media
- 84,396 engagements across social media
- 12,651 Construction Safety Week website page views
- 394,088 Construction Safety Week video views.

Dermot Carey, Director, Safety and Training, CIF, said that despite Covid-19 restrictions, the week was an overwhelming success.

"The sector really came together earlier this year when we devised and implemented the CIF Covid-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedure in line with HSE guidelines. The restrictions imposed by Covid-19 seemed to have inspired members and their workers to make this year's campaign a resounding success, and I would like to thank everybody who contributed to this success.

"But while Covid-19 has had huge implications for on-site safety, one of the key messages we wanted to convey this year was that every person should be vigilant about traditional risks, such as falls from heights or the hazards of working with plant. These remain the main causes of fatal accidents. We continue to push this message. All members and anyone operating a business in the construction sector must ensure that their workers understand these risks and take appropriate measures to protect themselves."

SPONSORS

CIF would like to thank to following sponsors of Construction Safety Week 2020, without whose support it would not have been possible, Irish Water, Collen, Gas Networks Ireland, Kirby Group Engineering, BAM Contractors, ESB Networks, Jones Engineering, Bennetts, Walls, John Paul Construction, PJ Hegarty, John Sisk & Sons, JJ Rhatigan & Company, Hilti Ireland, Chadwicks, and Designer Group. **C**

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A HOME FOR EVERYONE COMPETITION SET TO INSPIRE A NEW GENERATION OF BUILDERS

CIF's 'A Home for Everyone' competition is challenging the creative skill of our nation's young people, while also enabling contractors to give back to their local communities.

CIF recently launched its much-anticipated national competition for schools – 'A Home for Everyone' – primarily targeting senior students from 15 years of age. This team-based project competition is designed to get students working together to design a home that helps 'solve' climate change, the housing crisis, while also addressing inclusivity. In other words, the house design should be eco-friendly, affordable and be suitable for older adults or people with disabilities.

The competition is open to second-level schools, community training centres, and Youthreach centres. Schools and centres are being asked to put together teams of young people to enter the competition and register them on the website www.cif.ie/cifchallenge

Speaking about the competition Dermot Carey, Director, Safety and Training, CIF, says, "A Home for Everyone presents an opportunity for the construction industry to demonstrate the range of exciting construction careers available to young people, but also for young people to test their creative skills and see if they might have an aptitude for a career in construction. It is a competition for teams, and each member of the team will have specific responsibilities, just like on a construction site."

Shane Dempsey, Director, Communications, CIF, says that this is an exciting programme for the CIF, with 90 partners from the industry and education sector already on board.

"We are calling on all CIF members involved to use this an opportunity to build relationships with schools in their local area and show young people the exciting opportunities that await them in construction. Whether you are a home builder or a civil engineering contractor, we are asking you to engage with a local school and help their students to participate."

ADVICE FOR CONTRACTORS

Alison Watson MBE, CEO, A Class of Your Own, who consulted on the competition and will be managing the entries, has over 11 years of experience of working with young people across the UK on her own programmes. She is in no doubt about the impact of this type of competition.

"This is an opportunity to bring industry and teachers together in an inspirational way," Alison Watson comments. "It is a real opportunity to change any negative perceptions there may be amongst young people about construction, and put STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) careers in construction back at the top of their agenda. In addition, it helps teachers better understand what the construction industry can offer students in their charge.

"One of the reasons we chose a home as the subject for the competition is because everyone has been at home for a long time this year," she continues. "We are asking young people to look at their own home and explore their local community to come up with sustainable solutions and homes that are designed with everyone in mind."

Alison Watson advises that contractors should take direction from schools and teachers around safeguarding as they are best placed to advise. She also suggests to contractors presenting in person or online, that they should remember that their role is to be a mentor and inspire the young people, and not give them the answers. "It is a competition after all, and please don't get over-



Alison Watson MBE, CEO, A Class of Your Own.

technical," she commented.

TEACHERS ENGAGING WITH LOCAL CONTRACTORS

Stephen O'Brien, Chairman, Technoteachers Association Ireland, which is the representative body of second-level technical teachers, says its members are looking forward to engaging with and facilitating the involvement of local contractors.

"Technoteachers Association members around the country are looking to engage with local contractors to facilitate the programme in their schools and ask CIF members to reach out to the secondary schools in their locality to see how they might be able to assist the teams of students in developing their designs for this competition."

The winning team will:

- Join construction professionals for a VR masterclass to develop their winning entry into an industry-standard 3D, virtual reality model
- Present their design to the Minister for Housing, Technological University Dublin and CIF
- Receive €5,000 worth of installed Wi-Fi equipment, sponsored by Kedington Group, installed in their school or centre
- Be eligible for the CIF Scholarship/ Apprenticeship Placement initiative (T&Cs apply).

In developing this competition, CIF has worked with TUI, the Technoteachers Association Ireland, the Engineering Technology Teachers Association, and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. **C**

To learn more about A Home for Everyone, contact Denise Tuffy, Project Manager, by phone at 01 406 6066, Email: dtuffy@cif.ie, or visit www.cif.ie/cifchallenge

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MICK FLYNN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF MBCA

Mick Flynn, Operations Director, Flynn, has been elected President of the Master Builders' and Contractors' Association (MBCA), at the 2020 AGM of the Association, which was held online. He takes over the role from Rachel Clarke, Managing Director, MJ Clarke & Sons.

Accepting the post, Mick Flynn thanked Rachel Clarke for her exceptional work throughout her term as President in what has been an extraordinarily challenging year for MBCA members.

Tara Flynn, Director, Paul Flynn Construction, and Chair, CIF Galway Branch, was elected Senior Vice President, with Alan Coakley, COO, Ardmac, elected Vice President.

Mick Flynn expressed his thanks to Paul Sheridan, Director, Main Contracting And Civil Engineering, CIF; Alison Irving, Executive, Main Contracting, CIF; and Denise Tuffy, Administrator, Tendering



Mick Flynn, President, MBCA.

and Contracting, CIF, for their support and assistance to the MBCA Committee.

"I am delighted and honoured to be

elected as President of the MBCA and will endeavour to use the year to work with all the stakeholders to address what we in the industry see as the key issues," said Mick Flynn.

IVAN WEBB AWARDS

The recipients of the Ivan Webb Award scholarships were also announced at the AGM. This year's recipients are:

Construction Management Award

Full-time: Conor Owens, BSc Construction Management

Part-time: Brenda McTigue, Bachelor of Technology (Ord) Construction Technology.

Quantity Surveying Award

Full-time: Aoife Morris, BSc in Quantity Surveying and Construction Economics

(The part-time course did not run this year.)

Construction Site Management Award

Oisín Murphy. **C**

CIF SPONSORS SCHOOL COATS FOR TECHNOTEACHERS ASSOCIATION

The CIF is delighted to have sponsored 250 teachers school coats for members of the Technoteachers Association.

The Technoteachers Association supports and represents teachers of technical subjects in second-level schools. The CIF regularly attends and has representatives speak at the Technoteachers annual conference and supports its annual student awards.

This relationship is going to be further developed in the coming months as the Technoteachers Association provides its support for the roll-out of the CIF's 'A Home for Everyone' schools competition.

Speaking about the sponsorship, Stephen O'Brien, Chairman, The Technoteachers Association said, "We are delighted to have the continued support of the CIF. I would like to acknowledge their sponsorship of the classroom workshop jackets. This highlights how committed the industry is to developing closer links with second-level teachers and students going forward."



The workshop jackets sponsored by CIF.

Founded over 30 years ago, the Technoteachers Association has members in most second-level schools around the country. It provides support to membership in many different fields, from liaising with statutory agencies within the education system in areas such as subject reform and development, to promoting good practice within the classroom, and ensuring students

gain a vibrant and fulfilling education.

It has two national events each year. At its national conference, it addresses issues and highlights achievements within technological education sphere. Its 2021 conference is planned for Coláiste Chiaráin, Athlone, on 31st October.

The other national event is the Technoteachers National Student Awards, an awards ceremony held at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) each year, which honours the top achieving students in the State examinations in the practical suite of subjects.

"This is a wonderful occasion for our students and their families, and indeed their teachers. During both national events the construction industry is well represented, with input from CIF, Xrathern, and John Sisk & Son," Stephen O'Brien adds.

While both events are currently being planned as live events, they are subject to Covid-19 guidelines. Should it not be possible to hold live events, alternative arrangements will be made. **C**

INCOMING CIF PRESIDENT SAYS THAT THE SECTOR HAS NEVER BEEN STRONGER

Incoming CIF President Frank Kelly wants to build on the positives that have come out of the industry's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. **BARRY MCCALL** reports.

As incoming CIF President Frank Kelly, Construction Director, Walls Construction, surveys the events of his vice-presidency over the past two years, he focuses on the positive aspects and the extraordinary unity of purpose exhibited by Federation members during Covid-19.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

"It's hard to believe that it's nine months since Covid-19 hit and the lockdown threatened to decimate the industry," he says. "That determined a lot of the work done by CIF during the second and third quarters. Our main focus in the early days was trying to keep sites open, but the whole country went into lockdown."

After that, the efforts were trained on reopening.

"A key point was how resilient and focused the industry was," says Frank Kelly. "And this wasn't just CIF members; it was the totality of the industry. The willingness of everyone to get together to deal with the issue was tremendous. That resulted in the production of the C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), one of the most respected documents of its kind in years. The SOP demonstrated to Government that we had the methodology to get sites open safely."

That was no small achievement.

"It probably took the Government by surprise," he remarks. "No other industry did that. It was a pre-emptive move on our part and one of the positives to come out the whole Covid-19 situation. Construction was the first industry to get up and running again after the first lockdown."

That was not the only positive.

A UNITED ORGANISATION

"It showed what a very united organisation the CIF is," he points out. "The CIF membership represents every type of firm from multinational companies right down to sole traders. We are strong in numbers and in terms of the broad ecosystem of our membership. Ironically, Covid-19 proved to be a catalyst for collaboration and focus on a particular issue. That was what



Frank Kelly, Construction Director, Walls Construction, and incoming President, CIF.

allowed us to get back up and running again."

On the other hand, Covid-19 had the effect of overshadowing other good work being done by the CIF and its members.

"Unfortunately, Covid-19 commanded the spotlight for a long time, but a lot of positive things happened in the past year. The fallout from the pandemic had a serious impact on the industry, of course, and it resulted in a significant fall in turnover that put pressure on a lot of companies. But we didn't see many projects falling away. The upshot of that is that they will continue into 2021. They have been delayed, not lost."

Moving forward, he comes back to the strength that lies in the membership.

"The strength of the CIF membership is key to us. We are a very broad church, and the level of participation from our members is hugely important. The number of members who join up and give their time to serve on committees to deal with a range of issues is great. They find the

time to share their expertise. You can't put a price on that. The key for the future is to maintain that level of support. It's great to know you can rely on people in times of trouble, but we need to maintain that level of engagement in normal times as well. There are always issues to deal with, and these vary for members across the Federation. Every member must know that the CIF is addressing their issues."

MOST PRESSING ISSUES

According to Frank Kelly, one of the most pressing issues to be addressed in the near term will be the delivery of 'Project Ireland 2040'.

"The Government has already announced a capital expenditure of over €10bn for 2021," he notes. "Interestingly, the Taoiseach and Minister for Public Expenditure Michael McGrath TD have both mentioned that the construction industry is key to the recovery."

That acknowledgement is very welcome in light of recent history.

“It has taken us 10 years to get to the level of engagement we have with Government now,” Frank Kelly explains. “Coming out of the financial crisis, construction was a bad word, and we have worked tremendously hard to earn the trust of the public and the Government again. The industry’s actions during Covid and the production of the SOP are a key part of that. That’s very important as engagement with all Government departments will be key to the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan (NDP).”

Despite that commitment for 2021, there may be a bumpy ride ahead for some elements of the NDP.

“The NDP is currently being reviewed and things can change as a result. But we don’t want to see projects already committed to being dropped. That’s particularly the case with infrastructure projects. It takes a long time to get them through the process to be shovel-ready, and we need to have good visibility on public expenditure to allow the industry to align itself to it. That’s hugely important.”

STIMULATING GROWTH

But the signs are hopeful.

“An important factor is that the Government recognises that the Public Capital Programme is necessary to stimulate growth,” says Frank Kelly. “The industry is now up and running again to support that. This will be important for our regional members. The regions have not been growing quickly enough, and the NDP’s regional focus will be hugely important.”

There are other issues to be addressed in the review, of course.

“I know there are concerns about cost overruns and failure to deliver on time in some instances, but well planned and well executed projects generally come in on time and within budget. We are not the only country with these issues. Other countries have had them and learned lessons and brought in changes as a result. We can learn from their experiences.”

The longer-term reverberations from Covid-19 will have to be addressed within the NDP and other plans, he adds.

“We can see the impacts of Covid-19. Commercial development is starting to slow down. Housing delivery has also slowed. We need to deliver housing, but viability is a serious challenge. There are sites with planning permission for housing in urban centres, but, unfortunately, they are just not viable. A solution needs to be found collectively so these developments become viable, which will not only deliver

“ COVID-19 COMMANDED THE SPOTLIGHT FOR A LONG TIME, BUT A LOT OF POSITIVE THINGS HAPPENED IN THE PAST YEAR. ”

to the wider economy but also assist in delivering the much-needed housing stock.

“If we are going to be reliant on the Land Development Agency and housing associations for delivery, that’s not going to work. There needs to be a balance between private sector development and Government-built houses. The Government plan for population and economic growth is going to require more housing and infrastructure development. There has to be the right blend between social and private housing.”

PLANNING ISSUES

And then there is the hardy perennial, planning.

“Infrastructure projects have struggled to get delivered in this country,” Frank Kelly points out. “The planning process has proved difficult. There are a lot of obstacles to projects. Everyone is entitled to their view and to object, but we need to have a balance to ensure that key infrastructure gets delivered to allow for the delivery of housing and other projects that depend on it.”

There would be a social as well as an economic benefit to this, he argues.

“Large FDI companies will want to put their EMEA HQs in the larger cities, and we can’t do anything about that. But they may look at other areas if we can provide adequate social infrastructure in terms of housing, health, education and so on.”

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is another big-ticket issue for Frank Kelly.

“Construction is not seen as a viable career option in a recession,” he notes.

“We raised matched funding from the Government for our Construction Careers Campaign, which kicked off with the ‘A Home for Everyone’ schools competition aimed at second-level students. The focus is on getting back to the grassroots and into second-level education to get the message across that construction is a viable career, either through apprenticeship or third-level routes. The industry offers wide, varied and rewarding careers with opportunities to travel, but the problem is that when the industry is not creating opportunities for people, apprenticeships and third-level places drop off. We’ve got to correct that now we’re growing again.”

Gender balance is another critical issue for him.

“We are on a drive to get more females to join the industry. Covid-19 and remote working may have afforded extra opportunities for women to enter the sector. Many people probably never thought you could run a construction business remotely. But they now see what you can do when you have to. That will make the industry more attractive to a lot of people.”

NEW SYSTEMS, NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Another area of progress has been the adoption of new systems and technologies.

“The industry has been slow to transform digitally, but that is changing.

We are starting to see increased adoption of off-site construction and digital technology. That plays into the development of the SOP. A key feature of operating with Covid-19 has been a focus on reducing the number of people on site through off-site manufacturing where possible. That can bring about problems with capacity with off-site getting maxed out very quickly. But it creates opportunities for others to move into the space and add capacity or for existing players to expand.”

Frank Kelly concludes by saying that the sector is well placed to lead the nation’s economic recovery in 2021.

“We’ve said before that we are sitting in a privileged position. The industry has been largely unaffected by Covid relative to many others. The great majority of construction firms are still open, and that’s a hugely positive statement to make. Everyone has played a part in that. The SOP is on revision five at the moment. It is a living document, and we are constantly reviewing and adapting it to make sure it is fit for purpose for current circumstances. That means the industry will be able to stay open.” **C**

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“PEOPLE HAVE FINALLY REALISED JUST HOW GOOD THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IS”

Pat Lucey looks back on an eventful CIF presidency and towards a slightly less hectic 2021. **BARRY MCCALL** reports.

Outgoing CIF President Pat Lucey is looking forward to a quieter life but wants to continue contributing. “I originally thought I would find the biggest boulder in Ireland and crawl under it,” he says with characteristic good humour. “I don’t like the limelight, but I will look out for some things that I have an interest in and will stay involved in them. You build up a body of knowledge in things that you can use to make a difference. It would be a shame to stop entirely and waste that knowledge.”

He describes his term in office as an interesting two years, with some understatement.

COVID-19 IMPACT

“2020, what can you say?” he states. “Mother of God, Covid-19 blew us all away. There was a period when everything stopped. All functions, face-to-face meetings, and work stopped. Then we had to figure out how to get back to work. Do everything in a virtual setting. But, it worked. We were fortunate that we had within the CIF the structure to adapt to virtual meetings and the ability to move exceptionally quickly to address the problems.”

It was about more than structure though.

“We were also fortunate to have the right man in the right place at the right time in Tom Parlon,” Pat Lucey adds. “He was meeting several times a week with Government ministers and officials. He was articulating the industry’s case and giving them the information on what we were doing. People relied on Government to make decisions, but it was good that we were able to make sure they were making decisions, knowing what was happening in the industry.”

INDUSTRY PRIDE

He looks back with pride on the industry’s response to the pandemic.

“People have finally realised just how good the construction sector is from a health and safety point of view. They saw how good our people are when it comes to compliance. They also saw how good the industry is when it comes to sick pay and pensions, and how well we look after our people.”

The development of the C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedure for the return to work in May is a particular source of pride for Pat Lucey.

“What was produced was way ahead of other countries,” he comments. “There was nothing else even near it. It is now a template for other industries. That’s what happens when you do things right, and everything has been done following the public health advice. We gather the right information and act on it. People are wearing the PPE, observing social-distancing guidelines, washing their hands and so on. We have seen the result in the very low number of Covid instances on sites. There’s a lesson for us all in that. When people get together to put their shoulders to the wheel, they can achieve great things.”

A GOOD YEAR AHEAD

There is much to be optimistic about in the coming year and beyond, he believes.

“We have the NDP ahead, and from what we hear, the review may beef it up a bit. The end horizon will be extended, and more projects will be added. There is a lot of positivity about it. The Construction



Pat Lucey, outgoing President, CIF.

Sector Group has also been doing good work on things like the National Centre of Excellence. That will be up and running within five years and will help drive research, development and innovation as well as the digital transformation in the industry, and deliver more value for money to the taxpayer.”

AREAS TO BE PROGRESSED

There are areas where he had hoped for more progress, such as the public works contract.

“Some things like that are outside of our control, but others, like diversity and inclusion, are within it. Gender equality is going in the right direction, but slowly. Hopefully, we will get there, baby step by baby step.”

Pat Lucey will remain active in the CIF.

“As immediate past-president, I will be involved in things for the next two years,” he notes. “I have the height of admiration for our members and their resilience, agility, and commitment to quality and excellence, and their unwavering focus on delivering value to clients and getting paid fairly for it during this most difficult of periods. It’s great to be a part of that,” he concludes. **C**



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NEW MEMBERS

The Construction Industry Federation welcomes the following new members who, having met all the necessary criteria, have been approved for membership by the CIF Executive Body.

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IF CONTRACTORS ARE TO INVEST, THEY NEED A LINE OF SIGHT AND A PIPELINE OF WORK

PAUL SHERIDAN, Director, Main Contracting and Civil Engineering, CIF, writes that the right processes, systems, capabilities and resources must be in place to enable Government maintain the continuity of work.

The commitment from Government to invest €10.1bn in the National Development Plan in 2021 is welcomed. The priority now is ensuring that the right processes, systems, capabilities and resources are put in place to enable Government departments and public procurement bodies have the necessary processes to maintain the continuity of work. This will support employment, investment, innovation and productivity in construction. The CIF will be submitting a report to Government as part of the current NDP review.

CONSTRUCTION WORKS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Government's policy objective of reforming the construction works management framework (CWMF) will help drive its need for better value for money and underpin innovation and increased productivity in the sector. In this regard, the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) has set out an ambitious programme of work through its medium-term procurement strategy, covering areas around pre-contract risk and the use of the public spending to profile the risk associated with construction projects. We have emphasised the importance of adequately resourcing this reform schedule, and we look forward to engaging in the process on important member issues, such as price inflation, quality in tenders, risk management, collaboration and professional engagement amongst others.

GREEN PROCUREMENT

The continuing greening of public procurement is expected next year on foot of the publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's 'Green Public Procurement Criteria'. These criteria will ultimately become part of client requirements within tender documents and the subsequent metrics that contractors' tender submissions will be evaluated upon.

IRISH WATER

We hope to see some of the challenges around water infrastructure addressed in 2021. Irish Water is a key stakeholder in the delivery of the NDP, particularly around the delivery of critical infrastructure projects to support project pipelines across all areas of construction.

INNOVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY

Innovation and productivity are becoming key drivers of construction activity, and these pillars will emerge further in 2021 as being critical to the sustainability of the sector. Covid-19 has accelerated technical adoption, where practical. Innovation is driven by learning, knowledge sharing and how the system itself drives behaviours. Construction is a complex system. To optimise innovation and productivity, all parties in construction delivery process must contribute to it. It cannot be led by the contractor alone. The client, and particularly Government, has a huge role to play in developing a contractual framework and system, which drives innovative and productive behaviour. The current system regulated by Government does not effectively support this.

To encourage contractors to invest in innovation, including BIM and off-site construction, they need a line of sight and a pipeline of work. The more continuity they get, the more certainty they have



Paul Sheridan, Director, Main Contracting and Civil Engineering, CIF.

in their longer-term view on what they need to invest in, which includes attracting talent. The Government needs to look at how it delivers on its NDP projects. It also has to innovate with its own planning and construction processes.

TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION

Continued technological disruption is impacting on how the industry delivers infrastructure and built environment assets. Technological disruption is changing the consultant business model and the scope of service they offer. Client awareness of these changes is important to ensure that they understand the scope of services they are paying for and what contractors are required to deliver. Design and build contractual frameworks and procurement strategies exist to cater for contractor-designed projects. However, the current practice of consultants using traditional contracts to dump design activities and risk on to the contractor is putting the client's assets at risk and raises a question around quality, tender processes and value for money.

INSURANCE

The availability of Professional Indemnity (PI) insurance in 2021 has the potential to be a source of pain for contractors, without any clear solution for relief in the short term. Contractors should be aware of their insurance obligations, including notice requirements in their existing contracts and any new tender processes. It is recommended that they consider any potential for non-compliance. The insurance industry identified risk dumping onto contractors and low-cost tendering as two leading factors in the availability of PI insurance. Members should continue to monitor the growing incidence of consultant teams placing detailed design work and risk onto contractors and the wider supply chain. **C**

SEO JUDGMENT OUTCOME WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

JEAN WINTERS, Director, Industrial Relations and Employment Services, CIF, writes about some of the key industrial relations and human resource management issues the CIF will be working to address in the year ahead.

The coming year is shaping up to be a very busy one year on the industrial relations and human resource management front. The impact of Covid-19 in terms of managing workers on site will continue into 2021. Third-party hearings and industrial relations issues have been on the rise, and this trend is expected to continue. In the early part of 2021, we are also likely to see a final ruling on the constitutionality of the legislation governing Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs). The introduction of new employment protective legislation is also being planned by the Government, which will affect the growing number of workers in the industry.

SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT ORDERS

On 23rd June 2020, the High Court ruled that the SEO (Electrical Contracting Sector) 2019 was invalid, and the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 was unconstitutional. The defendants in the case, ie, the Labour Court, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Attorney General, have appealed the judgment in relation to the constitutionality of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015.

On 31st July 2020, the High Court granted a stay on the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015, pending the appeal to the Supreme Court. The impact of this judgment is that the SEO (Construction Sector) 2019 and the SEO (Mechanical Contracting Sector) 2018 will remain enforceable until, at least, the appeal is heard by the Supreme Court. A case management meeting has already taken place, and it is likely that the Supreme Court will hear the case in early 2021.

The effects of the Supreme Court judgment will have far-reaching implications in terms of wage determination in the construction sector. It will also have a significant impact on industrial relations. It is essential that the long-established dispute resolution procedures remain in place regardless of the outcome of this case.

MECHANICAL CONTRACTING INDUSTRY

As the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 remains intact, pending the Supreme Court appeal, the trade unions in



Jean Winters, Director, Industrial Relations and Employment Services, CIF.

the mechanical engineering and building services sector, Connect and Unite, made a joint application to the Labour Court for a new SEO in the mechanical contracting sector. It is envisaged that a hearing into the unions' application will take place at the Labour Court in early 2021.

NEW LEGISLATION

Government has stated its commitment to enact legislation to improve social protections for workers:

- Changes to parents' leave were announced in Budget 2021. It is intended that the current two-week parents' benefit will increase to five weeks for each qualifying parent from April 2021. This leave can be taken during the first two years of the child's life or two years from the date of adoption. This type of parents' leave is paid by the State and is different from parental leave which is unpaid.
- The Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar, has committed to enacting legislation on Statutory Sick Pay before the end of 2021. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has invited

public consultations on the matter. Mandatory sick pay currently applies to the construction and mechanical sectors, as it is provided for in the respective SEOs.

- The Gender Pay Gap Information Bill 2019 is expected to be enacted in 2021. The mandatory reporting obligations will initially apply to organisations with over 250 employees. However, the draft Bill intends to narrow this scope to employers with 150 employees within three years, and thereafter, all employers with more than 50 employees. Members will be kept abreast of the impact of new legislation on their business in 2021.

THIRD-PARTY HEARINGS

We have seen a marked increase in the number of cases referred to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and Labour Court as a result of Covid-19 and the ever-increasing employment protective legislation. This trend is likely to continue.

We anticipate that the Industrial Relations sub-Committee, which comprises representatives from all branches and associations, will be very active in 2021. **C**

COVID-19 IS ADDING ANOTHER LAYER TO ALREADY STRAINED RESOURCES

JAMES BENSON, Director, Development, Planning and Housing, CIF, writes that the country needs 36,000 homes each year for the next two decades to keep up with population growth, but current supply isn't matching either the demand or realisable output.

At the end of 2020, the industry hopes to have built 20,000 units, a positive outcome considering that at one point, experts believed numbers could be as low as 14,000. It's difficult to see how we would go beyond 23,000 in 2021, given the uncertainties that continue to hamper the residential market. We need 36,000 homes on average every year for the next two decades to keep up with population growth and demand, but current supply isn't matching either the demand or realisable demand.

BUDGET 2021

We saw a very positive introduction of new and the extension of existing schemes in Budget 2021, and we hope that will translate into a positive output for 2021. The extension of the Help-to-Buy scheme was welcomed. I'm slightly disappointed that it wasn't extended for a longer period, up to 2025. That would have provided a bit of extra certainty for the sector. All of that being said, they extended it to the higher threshold of €30,000, which will help consumers.

We have been calling for a shared equity scheme for several years, and I am delighted that has been included in the budget. We don't know the mechanics or detail of how the scheme will operate at this point, the departments involved are still working through that, and we should have greater insight in the next number of months. That will have the biggest positive impact on the housing sector next year. It will aid the issue of affordability, which is a key challenge for consumers currently 'locked out' of the market. Many couples struggle to save for a deposit and, in some cases, it's taking up to 15 years to save the 10% required for first-time buyers. We see many consumers, who despite rental repayments being more than what they'd be paying for a mortgage, still can't get mortgage approval. The shared equity scheme will help that locked-out group.

There is going to be a period of uncertainty in the new year with Brexit. Already, there are reports that a lot of nervous suppliers have increased price lists on insulation, timber, cement aggregates, and this will increase residential delivery costs.

PLANNING SYSTEM

The residential development process is very complex, including planning policy guidelines and density requirements that needlessly contribute to this complexity. There are many steps that are time-consuming and lead to unnecessary delays, increasing the final costs that are ultimately borne by the buyer. Covid-19 hasn't helped this, and these already slow steps take longer due to remote working. Covid-19 is adding another layer to already strained resources. We're hoping the Minister will be looking at these issues in the next 12 months and positive steps will be taken.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Where water and wastewater connections and infrastructure upgrades are required, this is driving up costs, and reducing affordability and supply. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CIU) places the onus on the home builder to replace the entire network in that area to allow for additional supply if it is lacking. The first-time buyer will ultimately pay for the water connection



James Benson, Director, Development, Planning and Housing, CIF.

and upgrade for their own homes, and additional homes in the community.

DELIVERY COSTS

An increase in delivery costs for design, planning and construction often means that a feasible return for the development is not possible. In these cases, the homes simply will not be built. We welcome enhanced standards, but these come at a cost.

Home builders, like the entire industry, are dealing with labour shortages, so increased wages, coupled with a shortage of skilled labour, such as plasterers and bricklayers, are affecting costs.

In terms of supply, we need to see a mix of everything – public sector on State lands or private industry on private lands. We need more social, rental, private homes. It's going to take an increase in supply across the board. It is the private industry who deliver these homes regardless of the delivery model. Whether it's public- or private-led delivery, the myth that the State can deliver homes at a more economical rate – half the price quoted in the private sector – is not true. All-in costs quoted for public delivery only account for the hard costs, ie, bricks and mortar. Private-led costs include the true cost of delivery, the development costs. **C**

WE ARE STILL AT THE PEAK OF DEMAND, BUT IT FEELS LIKE WE HAVE LOST A YEAR

SEAN DOWNEY, Director, Specialist Contracting, CIF, writes that when it comes to the future needs of the construction sector, there is a relatively clear understanding of where the industry is going and what it is being asked to do to bring forward a National Centre of Excellence.

The CIF's Construction 4.0 sub-Committee has been dealing with the development of policy to improve productivity for the past number of years. In early 2020, we had the publication of the KPMG report on productivity and the implementation of seven actions that were recommended within that report that was then ratified by the building innovation report in June 2020.

The refinement of those seven innovation actions and the setting up of an actions leaders group chaired by PJ Rudden, who was nominated by the CIF and other industry stakeholders, has resulted in a complete step change this year in both the CIF approach to bringing forward the initiatives, but also in our engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

There is a relatively clear understanding of where the industry is going, what it is being asked to do and the nature of the collaborative model we're going to have to adopt to bring forward a national Centre of Excellence.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is launching a call for a specialist consultant to undertake a detailed description of needs for the industry, and that's the traditional process they use for the establishment of a technology centre. It is best practice internationally that consultants come on board over a three- to four-month period and undertake a review of the background to existing research, development and innovation in the sector in the country and that this is benchmarked against other jurisdictions.

Then they would define what the model needs to be. It's quite clear from the research that our groups (the RDI Working Group and the MMOC Working Group) have undertaken that there is a need for a single entity that supports three parts: Digital transformation; modern methods of construction including off-site; and a research and development centre. This process should be completed by the middle of 2021. They will then publish a roadmap for a National Centre of Excellence in Ireland.

Tim Ferris as Chair of the 4.0 sub-Committee has been leading the conversation with both EI and PJ Rudden. We are positive that in 2021 we are going to have a clear definition of the framework for how innovation, development of new products, systems and supports for the industry in terms of bringing forward off-site fabrication are going to be developed and supported by the State. We're going to move quickly once the report is completed.

That's likely to lead to the establishment of an industry-led board that will have representatives from State agencies. EI will support it and manage the governance in the first instance. It will have an independent CEO, and it will set out its business plan for the first five years and seek both Government and industry funding to support it. Traditionally, that funding is 80% from the State, with 20% coming from industry. This will support the development of modular construction, off-site fabrication and system building, and we would like to think it'll reinforce the need for standards in this area.

INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

We are still at the peak of demand, but it feels like we have lost a year. There are indications that several projects have been delayed. I would like to think these delays are down to disruption in how



Sean Downey, Director, Specialist Contracting, CIF.

design teams and client teams were operating, and it took them a lot longer to process the procurement stages. Hopefully, we'll see many more public-sector projects being put out to tender in Q1 of 2021. Likewise, many private sector projects were suspended in 2020, so we would like to think investors will make positive decisions in that regard.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Many of our members have invested in apprenticeships. They have supported the CIF careers campaign, which is engaging with the next generation of construction workers. In 2019, a brand new apprenticeship in Engineering Services Management was developed in partnership with Cork IT, with 10 students enrolled. In 2020, 17 were successfully recruited into it. After completing the two-year programme, apprentices come out with a Level 7 degree in engineering management, a model that has helped bridge the gap between post-trade training and management. **C**

COVID-19 MUST NOT DISTRACT US FROM EVERYDAY SAFETY HAZARDS

DERMOT CAREY, Director, Safety and Training, CIF, writes that Covid-19 will still be with us in 2021, but the sector has led the way in adapting to keep our workplaces safe.

The past year was an extremely challenging year, with Covid-19 coming out of the blue, but we've managed it very well, from what was a very difficult start due to a lack of knowledge. We have a very good structure in place now, and that will continue into 2021 until the vaccination programme is fully rolled out. However, it is still going to be an issue, but we're continually monitoring the number of cases. We need to do all we can to keep the levels low. I see Covid as being on the agenda for the first six to nine months of 2021. We will need to see how contractors manage the rollout of vaccinations on sites. Will we reach a point where contractors are not going to allow people on site unless they have been vaccinated? We need to wait and see.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The focus went off traditional health and safety issues in the advent of Covid-19, and we have since tried to re-focus on it. Unfortunately, despite the sector being closed for two months, we had 13 fatalities. We can't be complacent about that. However some of these may yet be re-categorised as other sector fatalities, but those aside, fatalities are too high. Even one fatality is too high. There were five falls from heights and three mobile plant deaths, so we need to re-focus on those key things that have been in the industry for years, but we still haven't been able to crack them. We can't lose sight of addressing these serious risks.

TRAINING

We should see the delivery of a virtual programme of Safe Pass in Q1 or Q2 of 2021. Considering that 100,000 people go through this programme each year, we are hopeful that we will see this happen.

From a training perspective, CIF has received funding from Skillnet for our Construction Professional Skillnet. We



Dermot Carey, Director, Safety and Training, CIF.

plan to build on this in 2021, and we would like the members to get more involved in Skillnet and understand what it can do for them. We can provide funding for the training that members identify that they need. We would encourage people to visit the website www.cpskillnet.ie to understand better what Skillnet can do for them.

A HOME FOR EVERYONE

In skills development, we have embarked on our careers campaign 'A Home for Everyone', and this will continue in 2021. This has been a long time coming. Before Covid, we were struggling to get enough people into the industry, and we always had a plan to roll out a coordinated campaign targeted at school leavers to showcase the industry. We launched the A Home For Everyone campaign in October, with a design challenge for schools. There are currently 90 teams signed up for that, so we're hoping to build on it next year. We want to engage more with the teachers' groups and school leavers and career changers to try to promote the industry as a career destination.

TRAINEESHIPS

We were involved in the 2019 Ireland Skills event, but that fell foul of the pandemic in 2020. However, it is now planned for September 2021. This is a three-day event targeted at school leavers that highlights the careers in trades, and apprenticeships specifically. We are also working with groups to develop a series of traineeships; we've completed traineeships in curtain walling and utilities. Both are up and running, so we hope to expand on those, which give qualifications to people who want to join the industry and give them pathways to careers in the sector.

DIVERSITY

We have for the past three years run our diversity campaign, traditionally targeted at women. But, it is more than just women that we want to attract into construction. We want to attract a more diverse range of people into the sector. However, 94% of the people in the industry are men, so that's not a healthy ratio, and we must change that. **C**

WE NEED A MORE EFFICIENT, PRODUCTIVE AND TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED INDUSTRY

SHANE DEMPSEY, Director, Communications, CIF, writes 2021 will be a critical year for getting the construction industry on a sustainable footing.

As we move into 2021, Covid-19 will still be looming large. However, we have proven in 2020 that as an industry, we can work safely at near capacity following strict Covid-19 guidelines.

EY is expecting outputs to be down 16% this year. In Q2, the estimate was by 35%, so the industry has pulled up its sleeves and gone at it. Housing completion figures are around 19,000 to 20,000, which is only 2,000 below what was forecast at the start of the year. I think we will continue to operate and work well as the pandemic continues into 2021.

INVESTMENT PIPELINE

Budget 2021 was a strong signal from Government that there will be a good investment pipeline for infrastructure and housing. Therefore, EY believes that we may have 8% industry growth in 2021, that's coming from -16%, so we'll be halfway to getting back to where we were. I am optimistic about next year – the great imponderable is Brexit, of course.

CHALLENGES

The Government will have to turn off the payments tap, both to other sectors and to citizens, which may affect those being able to purchase our product. That is something we're watching. There has also been a commitment of €10bn in public sector infrastructure – 35% of the value of what we deliver in the industry overall and we hope that this will lead private investment. So long as the Government is investing in infrastructure, international investors will look at Ireland as a good bet.

REPUTATION

We've built up a good reputation for operating safely with Covid-19 and some political capital in the past while because of that. We're one of the only sectors operating near capacity, so we're contributing to the economy. We need to use that political capital, but we need to start to transition the industry more rapidly towards green construction. Public sector and international markets are looking at the industry to deliver smart, sustainable growth. Being a small subcontractor won't insulate you from this pressure. Everyone in the industry will have to transition more rapidly towards sustainable construction. Innovation is a huge part of that. We've proven ourselves safe, now we need to prove that we can be innovative and contribute to a sustainable society.

INNOVATION

There are frontier companies that are taking on the world in terms of data centre construction and modern methods of construction. We need to spend the next three to five years making sure that the broadest cohort of our industry is efficient, investing in technology and is becoming more productive, because that's where the pressure will be coming from.

The agri-food industry faced this challenge a few years ago, and every other sector has faced this innovation challenge. The first steps are always more difficult because they involve the larger players, who are racing ahead, actually stopping and collaborating. There's a term, 'co-opetition', where companies are still competing but will sit down and share the research and innovation needs for the industry. There's a huge incentive to do that because any money forthcoming



Shane Dempsey, Director, Communications, CIF.

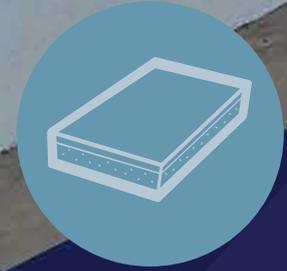
from the EU in terms of supports and the 'Green Deal' will be based on green innovation in the coming years. We as an industry – I include CIF in that – and all the representative bodies, need to drive that innovation and disseminate it down to our smaller companies, bringing them together to give us their needs when it comes to innovation. Currently, our investment in that is chronically low, vis-a-vis other sectors.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership of the industry needs to take the reins on its industrial strategy and set out how it will progress in terms of innovation, growth and sustainability. The Government is setting very ambitious targets in terms of retrofitting and 'Project Ireland 2040'. We need to take charge of our own industry and set out our own strategy based on Smart, Sustainable, Growth.

2021 will be a critical year. If we don't take the time to put in place these transformative changes, and just keep delivering as we have in the past, we're missing a huge opportunity to put the industry on a sustainable footing. **C**

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HBFI ANNOUNCES FURTHER NEW MEASURES TO SUPPORT HOUSEBUILDERS IN IRELAND

2020 has been synonymous with uncertainty and a requirement to adapt to an ever-changing environment. Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI) has successfully evolved in its second year of operations and shows an awareness of market needs with the announcement of further new products in November 2020.



SOCIAL HOUSING PRODUCT

HBFI works closely with Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), Local Authorities and the Housing Agency to better understand the market requirements. The aim is that HBFI will continue to be a facilitator in unlocking funding for viable projects that are earmarked for the Social Housing sector. The Social Housing Product is designed to provide funding for social housing projects that are contracted for sale pre-construction ('turn-key projects') to a Local Authority or an AHB (Approved Housing Body).

CREATING SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING SHORTAGE

How can we better address the housing shortage? In response to this question, Dara

To date HBFI has launched a range of new product offerings to enable more housebuilders to access funding to resume developments. In May 2020, HBFI announced the roll out of three new products alongside its Senior Debt Product namely the Momentum Fund, the Apartment Product and the

under 10 units product. The products were designed to facilitate a quick resumption of housebuilding throughout Ireland in the wake of Covid-19 restrictions being eased and to ensure HBFI reached a wider cohort of builders/developers. Speaking to HBFI's CEO, Dara Deering, the products have been well received by housebuilders and consequently HBFI has seen a significant uptick in the level of funding requests. To end July 2020, HBFI had approved €340m funding for 1,477 new homes in 29 developments in 16 counties. It is noteworthy that Social housing projects accounted for 34% of the new homes approved for funding.

In November 2020, HBFI has launched two new products to further its presence throughout the housebuilding finance market. These products closely support

HBFI'S PRODUCT OFFERING



the market requirements and have been developed following extensive engagement with market participants. The two new products are:

- COSME Product
- Social Housing Product

COSME PRODUCT

Under the COSME (Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs) Loan Guarantee Scheme provided by the EIF (European Investment Fund), small developments of between 5 and 10 units (inclusive) may avail of the scheme. For those developments that qualify for the scheme, HBFI may be able to provide funding at a higher level of gearing and thereby provide funding for small developments that might not otherwise qualify or have difficulty in raising funding for the development.

Deering stated that "no one agency will solve the housing shortage and no one type of housing can meet the needs of a varied demographic. HBFI was established as a targeted measure and is one aspect of the multi-faceted approach taken by Government to address the housing shortage. However, HBFI is keenly aware of its mandate and we will ensure that finance is not a barrier in the development of commercially viable residential developments". **C**

CONTACT HBFI

HBFI welcomes questions or queries from members of the construction industry and can be contacted by telephone on 01 2384000. Alternatively, further information is available on the HBFI website at www.hbfi.ie.

HBFI

Maoiniú Teaghais-Tógála Éireann
Home Building Finance Ireland

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HBFI is open to receiving
New Enquiries
via the HBFI website
www.hbfi.ie

Contact HBFI

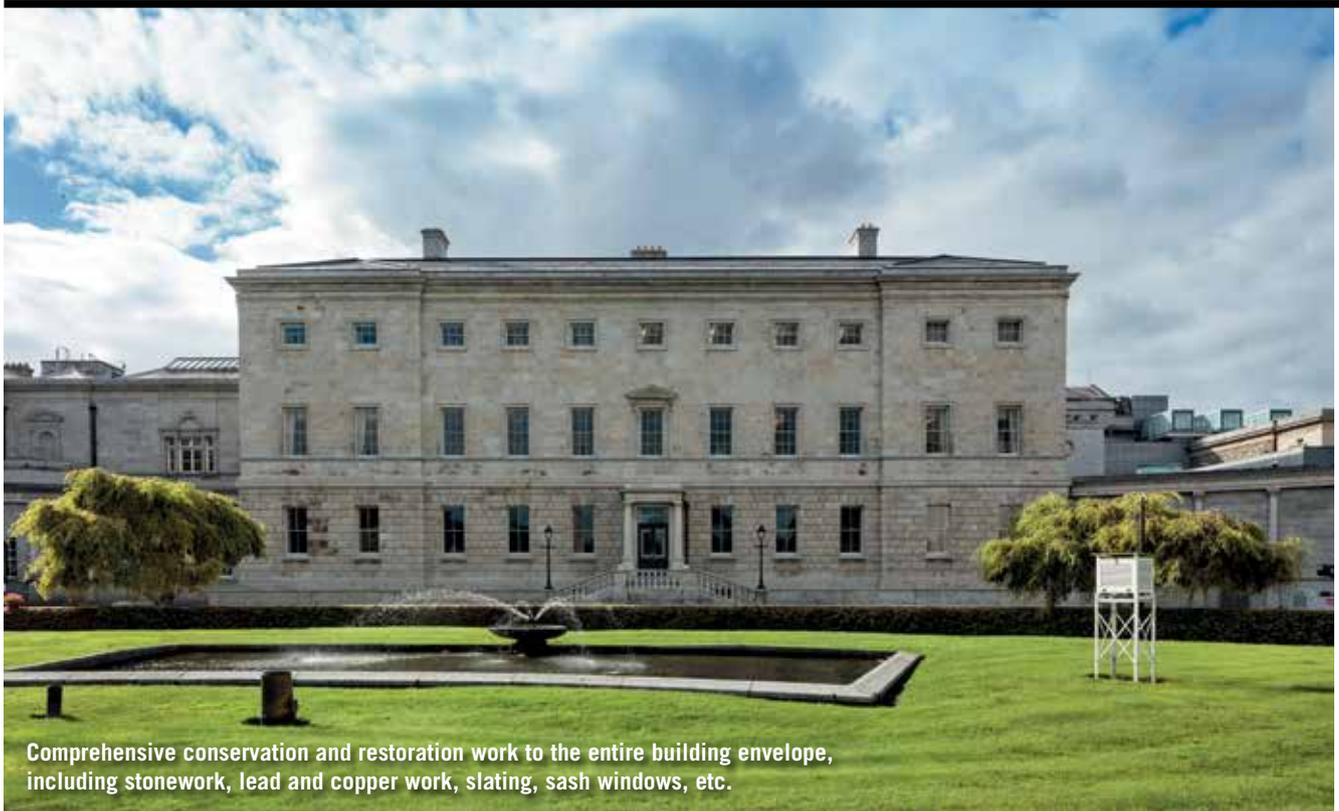
For enquiries please contact

David Faughnan

087 0683859 | info@hbfi.ie | www.hbfi.ie

HBFI

Maoiniú Teaghais-Tógála Éireann
Home Building Finance Ireland



Comprehensive conservation and restoration work to the entire building envelope, including stonework, lead and copper work, slating, sash windows, etc.

THE RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION OF THE HISTORIC LEINSTER HOUSE

Duggan Brothers faced many challenges on the restoration of Leinster House, but its expertise and ability to work collaboratively with its client and supply chain meant that the historic project's success was never in question. **ROBBIE COUSINS** reports.

The restoration and conservation of Leinster House was a most prestigious contract for Duggan Brothers (Contractors) Limited to win. The restoration and conservation of this iconic building represented a unique opportunity to bring together a broad range of traditional skills, most of which are extremely scarce in the modern built environment. This 250-year-old exquisite townhouse was crying out for a comprehensive restoration; a restoration that would also include the incorporation of state-of-the-art services, fit for a building at the centre of Ireland's modern democracy.

However, several critical issues discovered when the building was opened, meant the project management team and skilled craftspeople needed to call on all of their experience and expertise to deliver for the client.

As is regularly the case with conservation projects, particularly of this scale, the potential for change due to unforeseen conditions is large. Duggan Brothers' approach to the works was such that the successful management of change,

counteracted much of the inevitable delay and additional costs. Three directors from Duggan Brothers met with a senior management team from the Office of Public Works regularly, and weekly at critical points. This intensive and hands-on/cooperative approach, together with a commitment to responsible contractual behaviour is one of the key reasons why the project has been such a success.

The quality of the conservation work is acknowledged to be appropriate for the most important 18th-century townhouse in the State. With this extensive restoration work, Georgian Leinster House has been preserved for future generations of the country's political leaders as the home of parliamentary democracy in Ireland, and for its many thousands of visitors each year. The client's requirement concerning safety, security, fire protection, communications, and also the coordination of the

client fit-out works, were met in full.

The client acknowledged that the working environment for the members and their staff and the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas, was maintained to an exceptionally high standard, throughout the works. Given the forensic nature of the conservation and restoration works completed, as well as the scale of the building which is located in the very heart



The complexity of the restoration works to the roof called for craftsmanship which was in high demand but limited supply.



of the day-to-day business of both houses of the Oireachtas, it is acknowledged by the stakeholders that this key project objective was met in full.

HISTORY OF HISTORIC LEINSTER HOUSE

Leinster House was first occupied by James Fitzgerald, 20th Earl of Kildare, later the first Duke of Leinster, in 1745. In 1815, it became home to the Royal Dublin Society. It has been the seat of the Oireachtas since 1924. While the house has been carefully maintained over the years, intensive use and continuous upgrading of services have had an impact on the fabric of the building.

A 2008 Office of Public Works (OPW) report confirmed that there were significant structural issues and fire safety concerns in Leinster House. Upper floors had no alternative egress route and needed urgent remediation. Floors sagged due to overloading and important plasterwork ceilings in the 255-year-old building were at significant risk.

The house had almost 30 different wiring systems, dating from various decades. Windows, shutters, joinery, fireplaces, plasterwork, roof and stonework were all in need of restoration and conservation.

THE BRIEF

The OPW's comprehensive brief to Duggan Brothers covered the renewal of mechanical, electrical and communication services, together with new lift installation; structural strengthening works; 'fire-protection' systems upgrades; and air-handling systems replacement. It also included the refurbishment of existing historic windows, shutters and other internal joinery; stone repairs internally and externally; stabilisation and restoration of existing historic plaster ceilings; re-roofing works, including asbestos slate removal, lead and copper work repair and renewal; fitting of new WC's at various levels; redecoration; and all necessary finishing works.

SITE PREPARATION

To facilitate the work, an elaborate scaffold



The former splendor of the most important 18th century townhouse in the State is preserved for future generations.

was erected that encapsulated Leinster House. A temporary corridor that linked the Dáil and modern office accommodation in Leinster House was also used to house a temporary exhibit on the first 100 years of the Dáil.

Work on restoring and conserving Leinster House was carried out between December 2017 and August 2019. The footprint of the original house was the focus of the restoration works, which incorporated the Seanad Chamber, the Reading Room, the main hall and corridor towards the Dáil Atrium, the Ceann Comhairle's Office, the Cathaoirleach's Office, the Seanad Office, and the Enquiries Office.

CHALLENGES

While it was known that extensive work was required on wooden doors and windows, and delicate plasterwork, several hidden structural issues were revealed as the building was opened up.

Seamus Duggan, Joint Managing Director, Duggan Brothers, explains some of the issues that arose.

"Significant cracking was found in internal brick walls in several locations. OPW structural engineers developed bespoke solutions on a case by case basis.

"The cleaning of the outer stone revealed that significant additional stone repairs were needed. This applied unwelcome pressure to the programme, given that the specialist skilled resources were in short supply. Significant chimney repair works were also

required. Two large stone chimney stacks were so structurally unsound that they had to be rebuilt entirely.

"A significant structural problem with the floor adjacent to the Seanad Office necessitated the redesign of the primary services route in this area. The oak timber supports of the concealed gutters in the outer roof – which had once been infested by death-watch beetles – had rotted completely and needed to be replaced.

"While there were some known areas of movement within the structure of the building, which were understood to be stable, upon opening up, many were discovered to be potentially unstable and in urgent need of repair. Shattered and snapped bricks were removed and stainless-steel bars grouted into the walls to tie them together. New brickwork was inserted before the walls were lime plastered again."

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

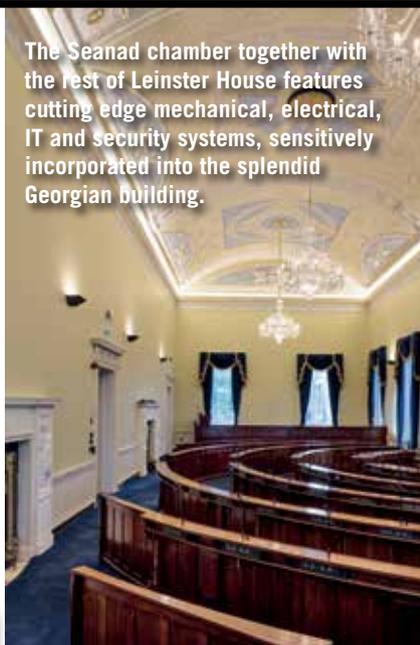
The structural integrity of the building was at the heart of the design intent, to the extent that the opening-up, floor strengthening and fireproofing works could only take place on a progressive basis, as the vulnerable building's structural integrity was enhanced. The sequence of these structural enhancement works was set out in the works requirements, which prevented full-scale opening-up works for structural evaluation and detailed design at an early stage in the project.

It was initially intended to retain all materials for re-use close to their original

PROJECT FEATURE: LEINSTER HOUSE



Important ceilings were firstly secured. Once the floors above were strengthened and fireproofed, the ceilings were expertly restored.



The Seanad chamber together with the rest of Leinster House features cutting edge mechanical, electrical, IT and security systems, sensitively incorporated into the splendid Georgian building.



Many significant defects were only discovered as fireproofing works were progressing, particularly upon the removal for the ornate door surrounds.

location. The intent behind this restriction was to prevent overloading of the weak structure. Ultimately, these were removed off site to alleviate some of the loading issues and provide for greater areas of works to be opened up concurrently. They were later brought back to site for reinstatement. The process was managed through weekly structural workshops and frequent high-level programme review meetings at critical stages throughout the project assisted greatly.

“Many of these significant defects were only discovered as fireproofing works were progressing, particularly upon the removal of the ornate door surrounds,” Seamus Duggan explains. “This necessitated significant additional out-of-sequence works and additional lime plastering.

“There were some welcome discoveries too,” he adds. “For example, intricate hand-carved details around windows and doors were uncovered after decades of paint was removed. It is estimated that well over 60 coats of paint had been applied to the very extensive and delicate hand-carved wooden mouldings throughout the building. However, this brought with it the requirement for additional highly-skilled craftspeople who were in scarce supply. We responded to these challenges by appointing additional crews of skilled tradespeople,

working weekends and night shifts, for months on end.”

WORKS

Ceilings and plasterwork

The emphasis was to retain and repair the existing historic fabric, particularly external and internal plaster coatings and decorative cornices. New coatings and crack filling were carried out using a variety of different lime and sand mixes. Ceilings were protected and retained during the structural upgrade works to the floors above. Once the floors were strengthened, the historic ceilings beneath were restored and redecorated.

Duggan Brothers contracted George O'Malley, who has extensive experience in this field, as a specialist contractor. Marked up drawings were submitted by the specialist subcontractor and approved by the OPW before any works commenced. The same process was carried out for the plasterwork repairs to the walls. All boast plaster was removed, and marked-up drawings were issued to the OPW for approval following the specialist subcontractor's assessment. Samples were carried out on the different elements of the plaster repair works to match existing finishes, including lath and plaster, cornice repairs, raking out and filling of cracks.

Stone conservation and restoration

Stonework included conservation and repair of all stone to the south, north, east and west facades, the east entrance porch and east balustrade. Works included the removal of all vegetable matter and encrusted salts from the stone, cleaning of all the stonework, raking out the joints where pointing material was not original, defective or discoloured. These areas were then repointed. Oldstone Conservation carried out these works on behalf of Duggan Brothers.

There was a significant level of stone

PROJECT TEAM

DESIGN TEAM

Client: Office of Public Works

Main Contractor: Duggan Brothers (Contractors) Ltd

Architect: Office of Public Works

M&E Engineer: Office of Public Works
Civil & Structural Engineer: Office of Public Works

Fire and Access Consultants: Office of Public Works

Quantity Surveyor: Mott MacDonald

Conservation Architects: Richard Ireland, Plaster and Paint,

Fire Consultants: Office of Public Works (OPW)

Stone Conservation Consultant:

Slattery Conservation Architects

Fire Protection Specialists: Brian Mottram

CONTRACTING TEAM

Conservation Consultants: Carrig Conservation

Stone Conservation: Oldstone Conservation

Windows Restoration: Lambstongue

Stone Floor Conservation: P Mac

Fireplace Conservation: Stone Art Conservation

Lime Render Plaster & Historic

Ceiling Restoration: George O'Malley

Roofing (Slate Lead and Copper): M&I Lead

Flooring (New): Aston Crean

Joinery Supply: Ballingly Joinery

Mechanical: KD Group

Electrical: Designer Group

Fireproofing: Niall Healy Construction
Specialist Joinery Contractor: P&L

Glazed Screens: SI Comm

Fitted Furniture: Truwood

Ironmongery: Perrem Design
Hardware

Scaffolding: McRory.

replacement at the parapet cornice where the flashings and the blocking course was lifted out and reinstated. The Ardbracken cill course required removal and replacement with a new profiled cill course. Limestone was sourced in Cavan Ross Limestone Quarries and then cut and shaped by McConnell Stone. There were localised stone replacements, indent repairs, and mortar repairs to the granite limestone. Chimneys were rebuilt with granite from McEvoy Stone.

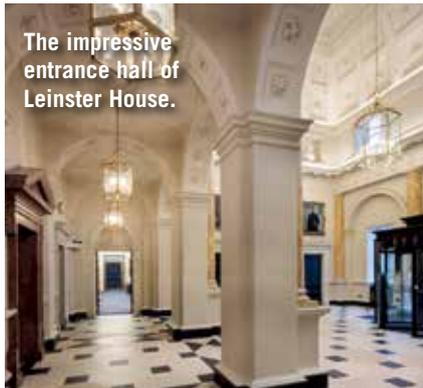
The retaining walls to the basement area were also restored, with existing render removed and limewash applied. The granite walls and balustrade above, including Portland stone balusters and steps to the porch, were repaired and reconstructed.

Stone flooring

Duggan Brothers appointed P Mac, which



The painstaking removal of up to 60 coats of paint revealed magnificent hand carved wood mouldings.



The impressive entrance hall of Leinster House.

has extensive experience in laying stone floors, stone indent repairs, mortar repairs, stone cutting, and working with lime mortar.

Existing floors were cleaned and inspected. A full schedule of works was generated, which included the breaking out of existing concrete and laying of new Portland stone, lifting and relaying existing stone, indent repairs, and the glueing and filling minor cracks. Then, there was a final clean of all joints and repointing in sand and lime mortar. A sealant layer was applied to the stone floor on completion.

Timber flooring

All existing timber floorboards were removed, numbered and taken off site for the duration of the floor strengthening, mechanical and electrical first and second fix works. Upon completion of these trades, each floorboard was reinstated in its original location.

Once the floors were opened up, a thorough assessment of the nature and condition of the existing floor structure was undertaken. Each room required a bespoke structural design, which included steel strengthening to timber trimmer joists, connected to the masonry structure. The prescribed sequence of floor strengthening works as set out in the works requirements, together with the requirement to detail, fabricate and install the new floor structures on a room-by-room basis, all dictated a painfully slow critical path. All new steel elements were fire protected together with the complete floor void, which was also fully fire protected. The installation of containment for mechanical and electrical

services could only commence once the fireproofing works were fully completed.

Repairs to the existing floorboards included de-nailing, cleaning and making-good notches from old service penetrations. Splice repairs were carried out by cutting out damaged or decayed timber. New pine floorboards were used where required. Repairs were also carried out on existing oak floorboards under radiators in window recesses.

Windows

Detailed surveys were undertaken on each sash, frame, and shutter. Ironmongery was removed, cleaned and reinstated to its original position. Sashes and shutters were removed to a workshop, where repairs were carried out following OPW schedules. Original glass was kept and, where required, new cylinder glass installed.

Throughout this work, specialist contractor Lambstongue retained as much of the healthy timber as possible. Carved staff beads had the paint removed and, where new ones were required, new carved staff beads were installed to match the existing.

In-situ works were carried out on frames, cill blocks were replaced where required, and new replica, profiled components to match existing ones were installed. Decayed bottom ends of the frames and outer beads were spliced with new timber to match the existing. In some cases, frames were repositioned in the openings. Pulleys were brought back to full working order and the original weights re-used.

Slate, lead and copper roofing works

All-natural slating from the roof slopes was surveyed, numbered and carefully removed and stored for re-use. The slates were cleaned, sorted and graded to be reinstated once new felt and battens were installed. Sarking boards were cleaned down and re-used. The existing box gutter required extensive timber repairs. The extensive flat areas of the inner roof were stripped and re-covered in lead to the highest standard. This element comprised a very comprehensive scope of intricate and highly detailed work and was executed by specialist contractor, M&I Lead.

Chimneypieces

All fireplaces were protected during the strip out works. Hearths were removed for the structural upgrade works and reinstated upon completion. Flues were surveyed and cleaned, and masonry repairs carried out, with structural steel installed for supports where required.

Duggan Brothers employed chimneypiece specialist, Stone Art Conservation for works required in cleaning, removal and repairing in accordance with a detailed schedule of works for each fireplace. Almost all fireplaces were repaired in-situ. Elements such as hoods and grates were removed to the workshop for ease of repair.

Internal joinery

Works to doors included the repair, replacement and upgrade of existing doors and installation of existing and new ironmongery. Samples of timber elements, joints, panels, etc, were presented to the architect for approval before works commencement. Selections of timber from the site were identified and used for repairs. Each component of work was inspected, marked up and approved before works were carried out. Upgrading of existing doors was carried out, and certification was provided on completion. Existing dado panels and carved architraves were repaired as necessary.

HANDOVER

Eddie Cleary, Contracts Director, Duggan Brothers, explains that delays occurred due to the discoveries made when the building was opened up.

“Towards the latter half of 2018, and following extensive discoveries about the poorer than anticipated condition of the building, it became apparent that substantial completion was not going to be achieved to allow sufficient time for the client’s fit-out during the Oireachtas recess period of summer 2019,” he explains. “However, a strategy to overlap the fit-out and the completion of the construction works resulted in the successful parallel completion of the construction works and the fit-out works by the end of the summer recess 2019. This was particularly relevant in the context of the Seanad Chamber, where specialist furniture and specialist services systems, and commissioning and testing of same, required an extensive period in a dust-free environment.”

The completed Safety File and Operation and Maintenance documentation to the standard set out in the works requirements, was delivered to the client on the date of Substantial Completion.

The restoration and upgrading of the historic Leinster House is an iconic project for any contractor to have in its portfolio. Rectifying damage as a result of the many building interventions required over the building’s busy history might have presented insurmountable challenges for some. But, by keeping a cool head, maintaining an open dialogue with a client well-versed in historic buildings, and having a team of the top specialist crafts people in the country on site, Duggan Brothers prevailed and delivered for the client and the people of Ireland. **C**



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Jones Engineering Manufacturing produced modular units are being exported all over Europe.

CHARTING A COURSE TO THE FUTURE OF CONSTRUCTION

BARRY MCCALL speaks with some of the people setting out the roadmap for Irish contractors to integrate Modern Methods of Construction into their operations.

In 2019, The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) commissioned the KPMG/Future Analytics Report on 'Productivity in the Irish Construction Industry'. This resulted in seven priority actions being identified as needing to be implemented in the context of delivering the next National Development Plan, initially costed at €116bn in 2018.

The Construction Sector Group (CSG) of Government and industry set up the Innovation and Digital Adoption Sub-Group to implement these seven actions of which Modern Methods of Construction (MMOC) is one action. The other six actions include the development of a new Digital Build Centre of Excellence under Department of Public Expenditure and Reform supervision, the development of a new Construction Technology Centre by Enterprise Ireland, the establishment of a Construction Research

Forum by the CIF, and other innovations on construction technology and planning application digitisation.

The first report of the MMOC Working Group was completed recently, and the next phase of activity has just commenced.

"The draft report is finished," says MMOC Action Leader Martin Searson, Quality & Lean Specialist, CJK Engineering. "That completes phase one of the qualitative work. We have shared the report with the different stakeholders, and we are now going out to subject matter experts to delve into it further to look at existing solutions and how they line up with new ones."

MMOC ADOPTION

The need for the industry to adopt MMOC is clear, according to Martin Searson. "It includes modularisation, off-site fabrication,



Martin Searson, MMOC Action Leader, MMOC Working Group.



Sean Downey, Director, Specialist Contracting, CIF.

off-site design and manufacture and a range of other technologies and methodologies,” he says. “MMOC cuts down on labour, reduces costs and cycle time, and delivers value for clients.”

“The benefits are considerable,” agrees Sean Downey, Director, Specialist Contracting, CIF. “Apart from reducing costs, it can improve on-site health and safety, reduce build times, and improve quality control.”

The potential environmental benefits are also quite substantial.

“MMOC is meant to deliver the most efficient construction methods using Building Information Modelling (BIM) to increase levels of innovation and digital adoption with minimal wastage on circular economy principles,” explains PJ Rudden, Chairperson, CSG Innovation and Digital Adoption SubGroup, and former President, Engineers Ireland.

Despite these clear benefits, the industry in Ireland has been relatively slow to adopt MMOC and other advanced methodologies.

“Irish construction is relatively low tech to put it frankly,” says PJ Rudden. “The industry’s multinational clients are all-embracing Industry 4.0. There is quite a gap between that and where the construction sector is currently. Those clients expect the same approach from our larger construction firms who, in fairness, are starting to deliver at the higher end of the industry. At the same time, many of our firms are SMEs, and we need to assist them to also upskill to these levels of innovation and digital adoption.”

THE BIG PICTURE

“MMOC is part of a bigger picture of the needed transformation over the next three to five years,” PJ Rudden continues.

“Productivity is not high enough if we are to compete internationally, and digital adoption is low. At the moment, we’re at about BIM Level 2D, but we need to progress to an integrated project management approach to include 4D on programme/scheduling, 5D on costs/financial control, 6D on sustainability/low carbon and 7D on lifecycle asset management. On modern buildings, only 20% of the whole life cost is construction. Unless you build in energy and low carbon efficiency into the future asset at the design stage, we will not be able to compete for and with international clients. We are near the bottom of the class, and we

need to get up there to the top quite rapidly.”

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Sean Downey points to a very positive picture around current developments in the Irish sector.

“Quite a number of Irish firms have already invested in off-site fabrication and different types of modular construction, such as pods and MEP modules,” Sean Downey says. “Companies like John Sisk and Son are working with Vision Built, and others have integrated different aspects of modular construction. Castle Ceilings’ normal market is in plasterboard and internal linings, and so on. They have looked at the trends and the aspects of construction that came before and after them in the process. They have integrated those aspects into their own process and built a manufacturing operation in west Galway. It’s great to see companies outside the very big ones move into the space.”

“Mechanical and electrical contractors are leading the way,” Martin Searson adds. “Private sector clients have been driving its adoption. We have also seen MMOC being used on the Children’s Hospital project. It was used on Terminal 2 in Dublin Airport as far back as 2008.”

BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

Catching up isn’t as easy as some might suggest.”

PJ Rudden notes that the sector needs to advance to more off-site manufacturing and slotting pieces together like Lego, but the right projects need to be in place.

“Construction firms need a steady pipeline of projects for this to be financially viable,” he comments. “There needs to be a continuous systems approach to off-site construction. It’s not a one-off. You absolutely need BIM for on-site clash detection. There are several major challenges to its adoption.”

Martin Searson explains some of those challenges.

“There is the insurance issue,” he notes. “Contractors can find that they are taking on additional liability. Off-site building also has funding and risk implications. You need to have funding in place in advance, and the current procurement model doesn’t lend itself to



PJ Rudden, Chairman, CSG Innovation and Digital Adoption Sub-Group.

that. There is also a regulatory aspect. The products manufactured have to comply with Irish Building Regulations. They have to meet certain technical standards and get product certification. In many cases it is a CE Mark, that is required. They also need to be tested for fire rating integrity. There is a whole range of issues, but they are not insurmountable. Other companies have done it and can deliver high-end products in a short space of time. We need to work with them and other stakeholders to learn how to do it.”

Overcoming the barriers is as much a question of mindset as anything else, according to Sean Downey.

“The bigger companies who have already dipped their toes in the water have had to deal with these already,” he says. “For example, it can be challenging in terms of finance. As one firm in the space has pointed out to me, you can no longer think of yourself as a contractor; you have to see yourself as a manufacturer.”

That switch from contractor to manufacturer completely alters the financial model. Instead of being paid by the clients at certain stages, contractors are paid on certain terms following delivery.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER CONTRACTORS

Another issue is alignment with the other contractors on the project.

“Will they be ready to receive the modules?” Sean Downey asks. “There’s no point in delivering sophisticated re-fabricated modules if they are not going to be used immediately. Will there be clashes or conflicts with what has already been built? All these things have to be lined up in advance. Otherwise, you will lose the benefits. You need an integrated approach to the management of the project, and the on-site team have to be clued into MMOC. But, there is a deeper strategic piece. MMOC demands the support of a project team working in a digital delivery framework. Otherwise, how can an entire industry move to a new mode of delivery? That will require a big culture shift.”

Overcoming those barriers and challenges is the key task being undertaken by the MMOC Working Group. Its approach has seen the issue being scoped out thoroughly and the groundwork being laid for the preparation of a route map for the industry to adopt the

“ WE WANT TO COME UP WITH STANDARDISED METHODS AND PROCESSES THAT CAN BE ADOPTED BY THE WHOLE INDUSTRY, INCLUDING SMALLER CONTRACTORS. ”

MARTIN SEARSON.

new methods and technologies.

“We carried out a baseline analysis by looking at international best practice across different sectors from housing up to semiconductor manufacturing,” Martin Searson explains. “We put those into a matrix, and we used that to identify the gaps in where we are at the moment. After that, we identified the risks associated with the adoption of MMOC. There are a lot more barriers than drivers at the moment, and we have been speaking to people who have done it before and asking them how they overcame those barriers.”

CONSTRUCTION CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

The outputs from that work will feed into the development of the Construction Centre of Excellence. “It will be part of the structure and framework of the Centre of Excellence,” Martin Searson continues. “The industry will need research assistance and technical support to overcome the barriers and further adopt MMOC; that’s where the Centre of Excellence will come in. It will support the wider sector and help test and certify products. We plan to benchmark the Irish industry against best in class in the UK, USA, Australia and Europe, and the Centre of Excellence will play a key role in that.”

The plan is to develop guidance on off-site methods of construction that are both sustainable and can be adopted by all strands of the industry.

“We want to make sure it fits in with the circular economy,” Martin Searson adds. “That can be difficult due to existing technical specifications, but that’s where the innovation comes in. We will work with others, including the education sector, to get that done. We want to come up with standardised methods and processes that can be adopted by the whole industry, including smaller contractors. Ultimately, we will be able to export that knowledge and expertise. That’s going to take a big collective effort.”

The next phase will see the working group report on how MMOC can be executed.

“We will hopefully have that completed early in the second quarter of next year. That will feed into the Centre of Excellence. When the Centre of Excellence is up and running, we will be able to make a big push to get the industry to adopt MMOC. I would hope that will happen within the next 24 months,” Martin Searson concludes. **C**

COVID-19 restrictions have driven the traditional industry to seek out MMC and offsite construction solutions to deliver on build programmes

Horizon Offsite provides structural light gauge steel products for use in the construction of walls, floors, ceilings and roofs.

The fully-accredited structural building system encompasses an in-house design team expert in offsite construction technologies, manufacturing through the Horizon facility in Cahir, County Tipperary and installation of the system on site by the team of Horizon-certified installers. This innovative approach to offsite building sees the Horizon team working one to one with clients to meet their every design and building specification.

Horizon Offsite was established in 2017 by some of the most experienced names in the industry, with Ger Fahey leading the team. The Limerick native has been involved in offsite construction for more than two decades, having previously worked with John Fleming, the Cork man whose company, Vision Modular, is driving innovation across the MMC sector in the UK. Initially backed by the Local Enterprise Office and then Enterprise Ireland as a High Potential Start Up (HPSU) focused on the export market, Horizon Offsite has seen demand in both Ireland and the UK markets grow significantly over the past four years. Managing Director, Ger, confirms that his company's output has doubled year on year for 2019 and 2020, and the pace of this growth is on track to continue throughout 2021. On foot of this rapid expansion over the past number of years, the company has recently expanded its Tipperary facility in excess of 30,000sq. ft., with an additional 7,000 sq.ft. of office space. The facility has the current capacity to process in excess of one million linear metres of steel per annum, which translates into approximately 1,000 residential units annually. The company has also been on a recruitment drive in Q4, with the team growing to 33 direct employees and more than 60 subcontractors, who work exclusively as certified Horizon installers on sites. The company now serves clients in both Ireland and the UK, citing deep



sectoral expertise as the company's USP.

Speaking about the doubling of demand for offsite construction expertise on foot of the pandemic, the Managing Director, modestly acknowledges an element of luck and timing, with the company being set up and resourced, ready to meet the unprecedented and, frankly, unexpected demands of 2020.

The fully-accredited Horizon Offsite building system is perfectly suited to the fast-track delivery of housing, apartment blocks, hospital accommodation and other healthcare facilities, commercial and industrial developments. Throughout the initial lockdown, the Horizon Team ramped up capacity, operating in two shifts, to deliver on essential healthcare

and social housing projects right across the country. The company has evolved from working on mid-sized projects to much larger scale projects that are, according to the management team, more complex in terms of buildability and with much shorter build programmes. Under this rapid delivery model, Horizon Offsite will routinely be approached by the hospital procurement teams and then appointed by the hospital authority directly, from that point, use of the fully-certified Horizon Offsite light gauge steel framing system is nominated or novated to the main contractor - once that main contractor has been appointed. And this is not just

happening for public sector work, increasingly, the Horizon Offsite building system is being specified by design teams as the optimum way to deliver on build programme.

Industry demand for offsite construction, across Ireland and the UK, is growing and this growth is not all driven by Covid-19. While the pandemic certainly accelerated MMC adoption, this is building upon the increased awareness of the inherent benefits of offsite construction. It is a comprehensive or holistic solution, ensuring frictionless execution of design, and overall compliance with building regulations for issues including fire and acoustic performance. This is the primary benefit of a fully-certified building system, as it allows for the speed and certainty of budget that project owners and managers demand.

"COVID-19 has highlighted the need for a smarter, faster, more streamlined approach to delivering better buildings with fewer labourers on site. Clients and their design teams have now seen first-hand that offsite works better than traditional building", explains Ger, "and our R&D never stops. Our innovative designers are continually looking at ways to maximise efficiencies and to improve the fire and acoustic performance of our products". **C**

Horizon Offsite Ltd is one of Europe's leading players in Offsite Construction and Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), providing a fully accredited structural light gauge steel system to the residential, industrial, commercial, healthcare and educational sectors. Contact the Horizon Offsite team at <https://horizonoffsite.ie>



1. Horizon Offsite Design Team works closely with the client's Design Team to coordinate, design and produce structural drawings for the load bearing light gauge steel (LGS) frame building.
2. Vertex is used as the Horizon modelling software to convert the client's architectural drawings into a 3D Computer Aided Design structural model (CAD) and associated 2D structural drawings.
3. Fully integrated service routes are achieved using the M&E drawings and allowing for cut-outs, letter-boxes, punch-outs etc as appropriate.
4. Horizon 3D IFC model of the proposed steel frame can be imported into the client's design to check for clashes (architectural/M&E etc.)
5. Horizon produce drawings indicating the plasterboard and cavity barrier requirements which complement the fire strategy drawings received.

1. Manufacturing is carried out by the 'ultra-modern' Horizon Offsite facility based in Cahir, Co. Tipperary.
2. The roll formers use Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) techniques to access the data that has been transferred directly from our Vertex 3D design models.
3. The steel coils are formed into the required components, positioning the cut outs, punch holes etc. from the data transferred. This process is fully automated and accurate to less than 0.5mm.
4. As the components are taken from the roll-former machines, they are then assembled offsite into panels by our expert technicians and readied for site transport.

1. The site process will be managed by a Horizon Offsite Project Manager to ensure the highest quality and that the agreed programme is being achieved.
2. The Horizon Offsite Site Erecting Teams are fully certified and approved to carry out our works in accordance with the Horizon Offsite Certification and relevant Codes of Building Practice.
3. All Horizon Offsite Erecting Team members have the necessary Health and Safety certification which will be submitted prior to site commencement.
4. The 'pre-assembled' panels arrive on-site and are lifted and bolted together by the Horizon Erecting Team in a process that is c. 60% quicker than traditional build.
5. The Horizon Offsite Engineers will visit site as required to review the fire protection of the Horizon structure and sign-off the structural aspects of the build.

"Horizon Offsite has a rigorous checking procedure prior to production, ensuring all LGS members are in compliance with the architectural, structural & fire resistance constraints."

Horizon Offsite Ltd is one of Europe's leading players in Offsite Construction and Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), providing a fully accredited structural light gauge steel system to the residential, industrial, commercial, healthcare and educational sectors.

Contact the Horizon Offsite team at
www.horizonoffsite.ie



Calais Harbour.

WEST OF IRELAND SME PROVIDES EXPERTISE ON FRENCH COASTAL EROSION PROJECT

KSG, a small west of Ireland aggregates and contracting business, celebrates 40 years in business in 2021. **ROBBIE COUSINS** discovers how its unique expertise led to it being contracted on a €400m scheme to protect Calais Harbour.

Cairealacht Chill Bhríde Teo or Kilbride Sand and Gravel (KSG) is a family-run micro-business based in the Gaeltacht village of An Fhairche (Clonbur), Co Galway. It was founded in 1981 by John Joe and Mary Holleran. Having completed his national school education, John Joe commenced training and building alongside his father, Martin Holleran, when he was 14 years of age in the late 1950s. He built his first house on his own at 19 years of age.

As KSG is a small business operating from the west of Ireland, the family have had to be innovative in developing services and products that the sector needs, and that gives them that little bit extra for when market conditions are particularly challenging.

To this end, in addition to offering lime-free sand and gravel, it provides civil and general building services under the KSG Construction banner. It also provides engineered solutions, including an xbloc coastal protection system, which it manufactures, and for which it has won several awards. It was recently contracted to provide xbloc moulds and training on a scheme to protect Calais Harbour in France.

John Joe and Mary retired from the business in recent years, but they still consult and help out with projects. Their son Shane, with an engineering and construction management degree, now

heads up the business. Bláithín Costello is the office and IT manager; Niamh Holleran-McGing covers tendering/procurement, quality control, and aggregate testing certification; Damian Whelan, covers on-site mechanical works; Charlie Cameron is in charge of material production and delivery logistics from the sandpit at Cloughbrack; Micky Lydon is a carpenter and building supervisor; and Padraig Conroy is the site foreman. In addition, the company is supported by many local subcontractors.

GENERAL BUILDING

For a small rural business, KSG would undoubtedly appear to be boxing above its weight. It certainly has an impressive portfolio of contracts.

“We have completed an array of specialised construction landmarks across our history,” explains Shane Holleran. “We have been the main contractor on projects in counties Galway and Mayo, including health service and commercial developments, along with various conservation projects of varying scales. In the past 10 years, we have constructed sports facilities in Co Galway, the largest of these being the Galway GAA Centre of Excellence facility, which includes an all-weather pitch development to cater for both hurling and football!”

AGGREGATES

“Our sand and gravel material is lime-free and naturally produced from its raw material form, through the process of



St Jarlath's Park, Tuam.



Shane Holleran, John Joe Holleran, Walter Holleran and Padraig Conroy in front of a batch of xblocs produced by KSG.

screening and washing, causing minimal disturbance to natural flora and fauna, Shane continues. “As result, we supply grit sand suitable for golf course maintenance, supplying to national golf courses such as Adare Manor and Ashford Castle.

“We are currently one of only three companies in Ireland to produce and supply certified aggregate for mortar under the NSAI IS EN 13139 standard. We also hold certification for aggregate for use as unbound material for civils works under IS EN 13242, and aggregate for concrete under IS EN 12620.”

CIVILS WORKS

During the early 1980s, John Joe was the main contractor in constructing facilities to improve Aran Islands to mainland transportation. This work included various pier constructions and an airstrip development. At that time, there was no machinery on the islands, so a barge of various heavy machinery had to be brought from Rosaveal, Co Galway, to the islands.

In 2008 and 2015, KSG received two national concrete awards for coastal erosion projects it worked on as a subcontractor: Caladh Mor Pier on Inis Meain, Co Galway; and Doolin Pier, Co Clare.

XBLOC EXPORTS

During these works, KSG produced nearly 3,000 xblocs, using its own aggregate. On the 2008 coastal works, Shane designed a jacking system for the mobile moulds. The system comprises a steel frame placed around the back of the mould, with a ‘bottle jack’ in that frame. This is hand-operated to release the mould, a simple but effective measure to allow the clean separation of the mould from the xbloc itself.

Having completed national coastal projects, KSG was contracted to provide xblocs moulds and training as well as 24, 4-cubic metre xbloc moulds to a major coastal protection project in Calais, the

fourth-largest port in France.

“We exported the 24 xbloc moulds from our village in rural Ireland to Calais and provided onsite training to foremen and labourers on a breakwater project costing €400m,” explains Shane Holleran.

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The first Covid-19 lockdown in March resulted in KSG having to close its operations, except for materials for farming purposes. Employees used this time to upskill and took various online courses with CIF Training.

CURRENT PROJECTS

KSG is currently supplying various certified TII Spec material for the N59 road improvement scheme currently underway at Maamcross, Co Galway. As it offers specialised lime-free material, there is minimal risk of contaminating the bog soil or endangering flora and fauna in Special Areas of Conservation. This makes the product ideal for many infrastructural works.

KSG is the main contractor on the upgrade and renovation of Tuam Stadium, Tuam, Co Galway. Works completed to date include the design and build of dressing room facilities and construction of a new front terrace.

PROCUREMENT

Shane Holleran believes that procurement has become so regional across the board that the rural community is losing out.

“Larger firms can be more cost-effective in their production of materials or pricing services due to demand for their products and services,” he comments. “But within rural Ireland, communities need more public projects to be contracted locally due to the lack of commercial work available. When it comes to providing aftercare and ongoing services, it is not the larger companies that are contracted to complete

emergency works on winter mornings when local roads or houses are flooded. It is the local subcontractors or suppliers of materials that are called in after a job has been completed by a larger company who has moved onto the next job.”

DIGITAL TRANSITION

“The digital transition of our business has been a gradual process, which was expedited this year because of Covid,” Shane Holleran explains. “Digital tools are essential, not only to gain advantages with our deliverables, but also for us to stay in business. We digitally track and manage all procurement and project programming, which ensures contracts are delivered on time and budget. Working in some of the most remote places in western Europe would not be possible without these tools.

“In 2017, we started the digital transition of our business. We have since reduced our carbon footprint dramatically, reduced paper waste, time and energy sources. From then, it seemed like every year construction was moving faster in the digital direction.”

OUTLOOK FOR 2021

In 2021, as a result of the increased funding available to county councils for the upgrade of local and national roads, KSG will be promoting the use of its TII-certified material and aggregate for concrete. It will also be upgrading its production system to accommodate increased demand.

“The demand for housing has risen again in 2020,” Shane Holleran says. “This, together with the increase in Government grant aid to upgrade existing houses under various schemes, will bring additional opportunities for the sale of our certified aggregate for mortar.

“Going forward from 2021, the fact that Ireland is an island and subject to coastal erosion, more and more specialised works will need to be completed, taking into consideration the recurring flooding in coastal cities, such as Galway and Cork. We plan to supply our xblocs to a wider range of contractors working on coastal protection projects,” Shane Holleran concludes.

The Kilbride Sand and Gravel story is one of generations of the same family adapting and innovating to stay in business, with all the highs and lows that entails. KSG is representative of the many small family businesses that are members of the CIF and support its work across the country.

In recent years, a fourth generation of the family has joined the KSG business. The recent birth of a great-grandchild for Mary and John Joe means there is a fifth generation in reserve who may follow into the company in the years ahead. **C**

GRANT'S HOME HEATING DESIGN SERVICE CONTINUES TO MAXIMISE EFFICIENCIES IN NEW BUILD & RETROFIT PROPERTIES



Once the Grant technical team has specified the main heat source, the correct high-performance hot water cylinder to support the system's overall efficiency will be identified. The Grant pre-plumbed hot water cylinder range is designed to heat water faster and more efficiently than standard cylinders. These highly versatile cylinders are configured for two heating zones but have options for two further heating zones and a domestic hot water zone. Following this, the correct heat emitters to suit both the property and the heat source's needs will be specified.

Grant's expanding range of heat emitters includes Grant Afinia aluminium radiators and the popular Grant Uflex underfloor heating system. Underfloor heating and aluminium radiators provide great choices to heat individual rooms in a new build property as both work effectively with high and low temperature systems like an air to water air source heat pump. This means that in addition to providing a balance of warmth throughout a property, both of these modern heat emitters will use less energy.

Grant operates at the forefront of the heating industry with its forward-thinking approach to research and the development of innovative, energy saving designs and award-winning heating products. With value for money, quality and contributing to Ireland's clean energy transition, underpinning its research, design and manufacturing process, Grant is the number one choice for construction projects throughout Ireland and further afield.

Those working on new build or retrofit heat pump projects can avail of Grant's free of charge home heating design service in three easy steps:

- ✓ Send planning drawings, a contact phone number and your preference of heat emitters to heatpump@grantengineering.ie
- ✓ A member of the Grant technical team will be in touch with you to discuss requirements.
- ✓ You will receive full property specifications with recommended Grant products

Visit www.grant.eu for more information on Grant's range of innovative heating solutions. Follow Grant on Facebook and Twitter @GrantIRL or Instagram @Grant_IRL. 

Think Heating. Think Grant.

Grant's free of charge home heating design service is helping those working on new build developments save time on the project and gain peace of mind from knowing that the exact heating requirements of a property are being met.

By working with Grant's technical specialists, long-term financial and carbon savings can be achieved through a smart, bespoke heating system, consisting of correctly sized heating technologies, designed with the unique needs of both the property and its owner in mind.

On receipt of planning drawings, the Grant technical team will carry out room by room heat loss calculations in line with SR:50 requirements. This information provides the heat load requirement for each room and helps to prove compliance with Part L of the building regulations and calculate the heat pump output, the hot water demands and the heat emitters for the property.

Commenting on the heating design service Barry Gorman, National Renewable Sales Manager

said, "We are pleased to be able to help construction workers who are working on new build and retrofit projects save time with this service. In addition to providing room by room heat loss calculations and specifying the best suited heating products for the property, our team will work alongside the project specifier to ensure from a heating perspective that the Energy Performance Coefficient (EPC), the Carbon Performance Coefficient (CPC) and that 20% of the total energy use of buildings is sourced from renewables are all achieved."

With a growing focus on sustainability, incorporating renewable energy sources into a property's heating design is important and can help to future-proof for changing heating needs. Proving popular for new build projects is the Grant Aeron³ R32 air to water air source heat pump range which has an ErP rating of A+++ and an SCOP of up to 5.4:1. Available in outputs of 6kW, 10kW, 13kW and 17kW, models within the range provide compliance and an energy efficient, sustainable, cost-effective heating option.



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Home Heating Design Service

Save time and maximise efficiencies on new build & retrofit projects

Our Free Home Heating Design Service can provide greater long-term savings. Take advantage of our team's specialist knowledge and allow us to correctly size the heating system and specify best suited heating products for the property, taking it to a new class of efficiency.

Service includes room by room heat loss calculations based on SR:50 guidelines, correct sizing and combination of Grant products including the A+++ **Aerona³ R32** air source heat pump, A rated pre-plumbed hot water cylinders, **Afinia** aluminium radiators and **Uflex** underfloor heating system. We can ensure NZEB standards (Part L) are met along with requirements for EPC, CPC and BER certification in the Republic of Ireland and that Energy and Carbon Performance is achieved for customers in Northern Ireland with heating and hot water sourced from renewables.

Start the journey to zero carbon today in 3 easy steps...



Send house plans, contact number & preference of heat emitters
heatpump@grantengineering.ie



A member of our team will be in touch to discuss your requirements



You will receive full property specifications with recommended products all available from Grant

All specified products are designed to work together as part of the Grant Multiple Package Solutions offering

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF RAINWATER DRAINAGE

Capcon Engineering is a leading provider of engineered drainage solutions for buildings. Having completed major contracts across Ireland and the UK, it is looking to increase knowledge among Irish specifiers about siphonic rainwater drainage.

Capcon Engineering began operations in 2010. At first, it delivered a diverse range of services, including pipe rehabilitation, leak detection, asset management, minor civils and rainwater drainage, on projects across the UK, Europe and the Middle East. In early 2016, following a full review of its strategic outlook, it undertook a complete restructuring and decided to focus entirely on the design, supply and installation of engineered drainage solutions.

The Capcon Engineering team provides a complete end-to-end solution for rainwater drainage, including design, supply, installation and ongoing maintenance for both siphonic and gravity drainage. It has a core design team, led by architectural technologist Stephen Morris, that works as part of the project design team from a very early stage, often pre-planning. Its installation crews, led by project manager Colm Whitty, are highly skilled and experienced technicians, most of whom have been working for Capcon Engineering since the company was established.

Capcon Engineering has carried out the design, supply and installation of pipework on most major commercial projects around Ireland. Its client and project list includes NCH; Penrose Dock, Cork; 1-6 Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin; Windsor Stadium, Belfast; Dublin Landings; Covanta – Dublin Waste to Energy; the new ESB HQ, Dublin; the award-winning Miesian Plaza, Dublin; Central Park in

Sandyford, Dublin; Diageo Block, St James' Gate, Dublin;

and many more. It also has worked across the UK, on projects such as Royal Albert Docks London, TATE Modern London, Wembley Apartments, Ocean Village Hotel, Southampton, Verde London SW1, Spectrum House and the Gridserve project for ESS Modular in Braintree, Essex.

The company's management team comprises Eugene Finn, Director; Robert Finn, Director; Donnacha Tobin,



Capcon technician installing high level siphonic drainage.

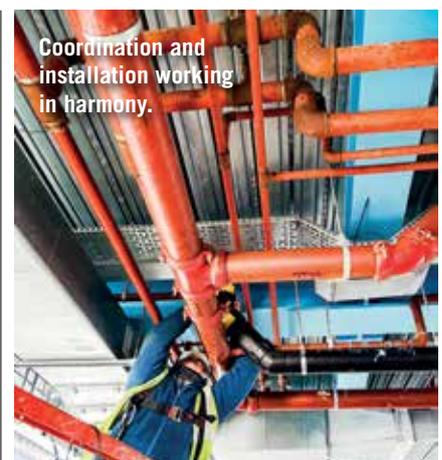
Operations Director; Michelle Loughran, Head of Finance; Lorraine Donohue, HR Manager; and Heidi Jermyn, Marketing Manager.

Capcon Engineering is a subsidiary of Capcon Group, which operates in the wider construction and property industries. These companies are guided by the executive management team and board members, Pat O'Sullivan and John Stack – both of whom have extensive experience, having held senior executive positions in industry-leading companies across Ireland, the UK and the USA.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Eugene Finn says in 2020, like everyone else in the sector, Covid-19 had an enormous impact on how Capcon Engineering carries out its work, but the CIF's development of the 'Construction Sector C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedure' and the other interventions it progressed was a vital support for the sector.

"I'd like to take this opportunity to commend the CIF for their proactivity and support concerning all Covid-19-related



Coordination and installation working in harmony.

matters in 2020," Eugene Finn comments. "As we work across numerous large-scale projects for all the major main contractors, all Covid guidelines are very clearly communicated and strictly adhered to. Our production has not been dramatically affected as our two-person teams typically work in a socially-distanced way under normal circumstances. Naturally and where appropriate, we facilitate our office staff to work from home."

Rainwater drainage solutions for all conditions.



PROJECTS

Eugene Finn continues, “Capcon Engineering provides an end-to-end solution for rainwater drainage, including design, supply, installation and ongoing maintenance for both siphonic and gravity drainage.

“We work across a range of sectors

ABOUT SIPHONIC DRAINAGE

The siphonic drainage system was developed in Scandinavia in the 1960s and has been in use in the UK and Ireland since the early 1990s. A bespoke, engineered solution, siphonic drainage utilises the power of a vertical-induced vacuum to create an efficient, high-velocity roof drainage solution.

The main benefits of mechanical siphonic drainage are:

- The pipes run horizontally within a building envelope
- It reduces underground drainage requirements
- There is up to a 45% cost saving overall
- It has exceptionally accurate design software
- It enables easy routing of rainwater from the roof to the desired discharge location, making the system an ideal partner for rainwater harvesting.

Siphonic drainage is seen by many as the most significant innovation in construction roofing technology in the past 25 years. From its high performance and space-saving properties to its capability to reduce infrastructure and plumbing maintenance, siphonic drainage can offer projects so much. Architects also prefer it thanks to its outstanding flexibility in design and capacity for eco-sustainability.

in Ireland and the UK, including pharmaceutical, healthcare, education, residential, commercial and industrial, including data centres.

Recent significant projects that Capcon Engineering has been contracted on include WuXi Pharmaceuticals, Dundalk; National Children’s Hospital, Dublin; Brewery Quarter Student Accommodation, Cork; Gridserve with ESS Modular in Braintree, Essex; Dublin Landings; Dublin-based data centre; and Spencer Dock, North and South.

OUTLOOK

Eugene Finn says that Capcon Engineering’s order book for Ireland in 2021 is very healthy. “One major focus for the business in 2021 is to expand our presence in the UK construction sector,” Eugene Finn comments. “We are actively pursuing specific contracts in London and the south-east regions within our established customer base. As always, we are open to new opportunities and partnerships.

“In the new year, we hope to be announcing an acquisition that will complement our specialist services and bring opportunities for further growth.”

CHALLENGES

Eugene Finn believes that on a macro-level Ireland has a burdensome planning system that stifles progress.

“There is a lot of work to be done on improving the planning process in Ireland. Key projects and opportunities are blocked or held up for years, and there seems to be a lack of vision for the long-term development of Ireland as a whole,” he comments. “We have world-class design teams, and with their ambitious clients, no shortage of vision for exciting and outstanding development across Ireland. Often though it proves too difficult to get through the bureaucracy at the various levels of the planning process.

“The internal challenge for our business is continuing to get the message out about the advantages of an engineered siphonic drainage system over more traditional gravity systems. We are rolling out a siphonic drainage CPD in early 2021 to address this knowledge gap and reach more architects and engineers.”

DIGITAL CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY

Digital construction technology plays a crucial role in Capcon Engineering’s operations.

“Our team places great emphasis on the role of BIM within our design process. It is crucial in helping us to meet our clients’ needs,” comments Eugene Finn. “The use of digital construction technologies ensures that consistency is achieved throughout the construction process. It aids the pre-fabrication of the drainage systems by confirming that what is designed, suits the on-site conditions.

“As a specialist contractor working with main contractors who use BIM, we understand that our works also need to be modelled in 3D to maintain project coordination standards. We work closely with our clients by using project collaboration software, such as BIM Glue and A360, to facilitate cooperation as efficiently as possible.”

On-site, Capcon Engineering utilises the Fieldwire app across its technicians and project managers to facilitate better collaboration, task management and reporting.

RECRUITMENT

Over the years, Capcon Engineering has been affected by the skills shortage in the sector.

The company has taken a ‘grow your own’ approach to developing and retaining talent.

“We take on unskilled and semi-skilled operatives and train them up in our specialist processes as well as our company operational standards,” Eugene Finn adds. “Most of our crews have been with us since the establishment of the company. In-house, we have cultivated a long-serving team of designers, technicians and project managers that embody our values and long-term vision for Capcon Engineering,” he concludes. **C**

For enquiries, contact Donnacha Tobin on Phone: 01 651 0302, email, donnacha.tobin@capconeng.com, or visit: www.capconeng.com

2021 – A YEAR MORE ORDINARY?

FRANCES MCNALLY writes that when it comes to planning for retirement, you need to set out a plan for what you will need to fund your retirement, and then stick to this plan.

It is simply amazing how much our world has been turned upside down in the space of a year – social distancing, remote working and nationwide lockdowns were unknown phrases before March 2020. Nobody could have predicted the changes to our economy and the strength and flexibility of a construction sector, which rose to meet the new challenges posed by this pandemic. Nearly every facet of our lives has been changed.

EXCEPT OUR PENSIONS

A good indicator of investment markets is the S&P 500 index of shares, which started 2020 at 3,257 points. It grew at a steady pace up until 19th February, when uncertainty over Covid-19 began to emerge. Over the next five weeks, the index plummeted by almost 34% to 2,237 points on 23rd March. By 16th November, the S&P500 index had reached a new all-time high of just over 3,600 points, an increase of 10% in the year to date and a staggering 60% increase from the low point in March.

Investors who stayed the course saw their funds recover and, what's more, those who exited near the bottom have missed an incredible recovery. This demonstrates the importance of taking a long-term approach to pensions and not trying to time the markets.

WHAT ABOUT BREXIT?

Brexit is another new word that seems to have been on our horizon forever at this stage. Again, we do not have a crystal ball to help us estimate the impact of Brexit on pension funds, but we come back to the message that it is impossible to try and time markets. Brexit may or may not have some impact on your pension investments, but it is worth remembering it will likely only affect a relatively small part of a globally diversified portfolio of stocks. Try to avoid stressing over every small move in markets, but rather, stick to your long-term plan. As pension specialists, we believe that diversity is the best protection you can have against market volatility. Align your investment strategy with your risk appetite, and let the funds work with the full benefit of time.

THE STATE OF STATE PENSIONS

We were correct about one prediction we made last year. This related to the unfunded pension liabilities owed by the Irish State. These are the promises made in the form of State old-age pensions and public-sector



Frances McNally,
Manager, Construction
Executive Retirement
Savings.

pensions, and the last published estimate of this liability stood at €345bn in 2015. This issue is only getting worse, as over the next 30 years, the ratio of people working and paying into the State to pensioners receiving pensions from the State scheme will fall from 5:1 to 2:1.

The last Government's response was to push out the State pension age to 67 years of age (from January 2021) and 68 years of age from 2028. We were also expecting to see the introduction of auto-enrolment into pension schemes from 2022. As we anticipated, both of these measures have lost their way. Pushing out the pension age became a major election issue and was quickly shelved, and the State pension age will remain at 66 years of age from January 2021. A new Commission on Pensions is being established to review this issue and will no doubt add to the delays. The so-called 'pensions timebomb' is only getting more explosive as time goes by, and action must be taken to ensure that future generations can guarantee a minimum standard of living in retirement.

WHAT TO DO IN 2021?

The State will not deliver the lifestyle you want in retirement, so it's up to all of us to fund this for ourselves. To do this, you need to make a plan about how you are going to fund your retirement and stick to this plan. Short-term volatility will happen, but remember your retirement plan is a long-term plan. Have an investment strategy that matches this timeframe.

The team in Construction Executive Retirement Savings (CERS) look forward to working with the construction industry to secure the pension needs of the sector in the years and decades to come, helping you to achieve the retirement you deserve. **C**

Frances McNally is the manager of CERS. If you would like to find out more about how CERS can deliver a flexible and bespoke scheme to meet the needs of your organisation, contact them at info@cers.ie, or by phone: 01 407 1430.

LOOKING BACKWARD TO MOVE FORWARD

SUSAN O'MARA writes that when it comes to pensions time in the market may be better than trying to time the market.

While much of the writing at this time of year is focused on the outlook for 2021, I think for retirement savers and investors, it is useful to look back at the year we are saying a not-so-fond farewell to, to understand the lessons we should learn.

If you are saving for your retirement, you are likely to be invested in a fund that has some weighting in equities (ie, the stock market), and this has made many headlines this year.

The MSCI World Index is a standard benchmark for global equities and is used to represent a broad cross-section of global stock markets.

If you look at the performance of this index from 1st January to the date at the time of writing, you will see that the performance is +2.49%. This includes a decline in performance by -30% in March. At that time, it was hard to imagine the potential for a positive result in global stock markets in 2020.

When speaking with pension schemes and life assurance companies, the bulk of the instructions to switch to cash were during the March and April period, with the result that many investors who switched to cash may have missed the rebound.

If you take investor A, who invests €1,000 on 1st January 2020, in a fund that tracks the index, the value of their holding on 17th November is €1,025. Investor B also invested €1,000 on 1st January 2020, in the same fund that tracks the index. Investor B switched to cash on 12th March, before the bottom of the market. Investor B was relieved to see an upturn in markets and by June felt comfortable buying back in, doing so on 8th June. The value of Investor B's holding on 17th November is €829.

A and B are fictional entities in order to make a point. However, they are not fictional behaviours. It can be very tempting to protect your investment from losses,



Susan O'Mara, Milestone Advisory.

but mostly the decision is made after a considerable drop in the market, thereby buying the loss.

ARE THERE ANY REASONS TO SWITCH TO CASH?

If you are in the early or mid-point of your retirement savings journey, it is unlikely that any reactionary investment decision you make will benefit your fund in the long run.

There are times when leaving the market is warranted, of course. If you are very close to retirement, you may need to review your investment strategy depending on how close you are to drawing down your benefits. Individual financial advice is valuable. Seeking advice can ensure you make a decision that is suitable for your specific circumstances. Time in the market is better than trying to time the market.

No matter what the economic outlook for 2021 and beyond is, continuing to fund for retirement is important. The following points will help you to protect your fund:

- Maintain discipline in your investment strategy. If possible and if advised, stay invested. Avoid making an emotional decision.
- Volatility is a normal part of investing: The ups and downs are a regular feature of investing in the market, some dips are lower and longer than others if

you are in it for the medium and long term you should be able to weather any storms.

- Cash funds deliver no returns and are not a good long-term investment strategy. The monetary and fiscal policies that have benefited the economy over the last decade or so have been unfavourable to deposit interest rates, little to no growth possible in cash for the foreseeable future.
- Time in the market is better than trying to time the market: Trying to get out before the dip and back in before the bounce is incredibly difficult, even for professional investors. It rarely pays off for the inexperienced as outlined in the example above.
- Diversification is key: As the well-worn cliché goes, it is best not to put all your eggs in one basket, and this rings true with investing. Even if you follow the above guidance, it only really works well if you are not holding one single stock.

If you are concerned about the performance of your fund or investment, you should contact your financial advisor. **C**

Susan O'Mara is a financial services consultant with Milestone Advisory DAC t/a Milestone Advisory, which is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. For more information, visit www.milestoneadvisory.ie

RENEWABLE ENERGY INTO 2021



A windfarm installation requiring the use of a Laois Hire Teleporter

According to the Irish Wind Energy Association, there are just under 400 Windfarms on the island of Ireland, with a wind energy capacity of 5510 MW. A report from a wind energy lobby group found that Wind provided 37 per cent of Ireland's electricity in the first three quarter of 2019. Looking at these figures it is easy to see how vitally important the Renewables sector is in Ireland. Laois Hire has a dedicated Renewable's division providing clients in both the civil, construction and installation sectors such as Nordex SE, Vestas, Siemens, ESB, Fairwind, Roadbridge Ltd and Duggan Brothers Ltd with everything from start to finish of their project.

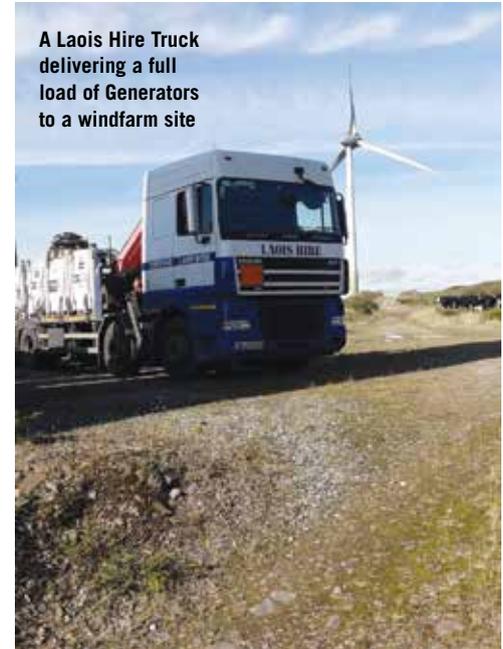
Laois Hire's Renewable Division have a long-standing relationship with Enercon GmbH, currently one of the biggest players in the Renewable Energy sector in Ireland, as well as many of the other large companies operating in this sector. Laois Hire have supplied equipment on projects all over the country, from the highest mountains in Donegal to the tail end of Kerry, and further afield in Wales and Scotland. This equipment includes:

- > Teleporters
- > MEWPs
- > Power generation
- > Tower Lights
- > Fuel management
- > Washer bowlers & Fuel bowlers
- > Temporary site Accommodation such as office blocks/drying rooms/canteen facilities/toilet blocks/COVID wash stations
- > 24 hour call out service

Their Renewables Division works closely with Enercon GmbH site management teams. Project Coordinator Aidan Harrington says "We at Enercon GmbH are using Laois Hire because of their reliability on site, flexibility with delivery and collection and their never-let-us-down attitude no matter how tough it gets up in the mountains! Their customer service is second to none. They have a very hands on approach and rapid response to any service requirements on site. No job is too big or too small and they always have the right equipment for the job. I recently had an issue on one of our installations in Sligo. We had a crew working over the weekend and a machine went down on a Sunday. Laois Hire had a replacement machine out to us within 4 hours from the first call, no issues. Fantastic service, and that's never easy working in remote areas in tough conditions".

Keith McCann, Manager of the Laois Hire Renewables Division sees their involvement with the sector becoming even greater in the future. "Laois Hire will be involved in more major Renewable projects for the coming year, and many years to follow. Both Onshore and Offshore Wind Turbines, along with Solar energy, will be playing a huge role in our country's Climate Action plan with a target of 70% renewable electricity by 2030. We will deliver our extensive fleet of hire equipment to windfarms on and offshore as well as the acres of Solar Power farms."

Laois Hire's Renewable Division are also playing an active part in supplying plant and tools to support the construction of Energy Storage based solutions. Lumcloon Energy has developed Ireland's largest portfolio of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) which is currently under



A Laois Hire Truck delivering a full load of Generators to a windfarm site

construction. One of their landmark projects is the Shannonbridge 100MW BESS. Working with Hanwha Energy Corporation, the project cost is €150m. The BESS will provide System Services to the power system, enhancing the management of the transmission grid, and ultimately increasing the stability of the electricity supply to consumers. This will assist the System Operator in achieving the targets for electricity demand to be met by renewables.

Keith McCann explains why he feel Laois Hire are so successful in this sector. "I believe the key to the success of the Laois Hire Group comes down to the constant updating and expansion of our fleet right across the company, in all divisions. This isn't going to change in 2021. We are aware that this continuous Investment is absolutely essential to deliver a high-quality service to customers. We believe in our equipment and our service and are proud that we can deliver on our promises."

Michael Killeen, Managing Director of the Laois Hire Group, adds: "The renewable energy sector is a very exciting and interesting part of our business. We set up our Renewables Division in 2012, headed up by our Renewables Specialist Division Manager, Keith McCann. Keith has vast experience in the area, and we have established excellent working relationships with all our key clients. We have the infrastructure to service this very demanding sector, in very remote areas and at times in very challenging weather conditions. Our highly experienced trained teams, provide an unrivalled 24/7 back up service." **C**

For more information, or any queries:
Laois Hire: 1800 20 40 40 / laoshire.com

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UNLOCKING THE FULL PROJECT MANAGEMENT CAPACITY OF MICROSOFT

CONOR GREHAM, Business Development Executive, CIF Learning and Development, writes about the latest suite of Microsoft project management courses available from the department.

At the beginning of 2020, CIF Learning & Development has been looking at providing learning modules online. Like with many other services, Covid-19 has since become the catalyst that accelerated our move to the virtual space.

While Zoom and other new programmes have become essential digital tools for our work, we also continue to use the traditional programmes, such as the Microsoft (MS) suite, in our daily lives. While these packages have been with us for years, they have also evolved, with new programmes being developed to meet changing needs.

CIF Learning & Development has developed a new suite of short MS courses that will, amongst other things, provide students with the skills to tap into the full potential of MS project management tools.

MICROSOFT EXCEL

MS Excel is a natural starting point for our suite of MS courses. CIF Learning & Development provides two one-day courses, MS Introduction and MS Advanced. On completion of both courses, students will be introduced to the fundamental features of spreadsheets and their use, advancing to being comfortable with automating worksheet functionality, as well as using a variety of different analytical tools, data presentation and working effectively with multiple workbooks.

In 2021, we will add a third MS Excel course – Data Visualisation with MS Excel – to the suite. This course is designed to introduce existing users of MS Excel to the Principles of Data Visualisation using Microsoft Excel charts.

By the end of this course, students should be comfortable with applying data visualisation principles to create informative dashboards using chart options and chart design in Excel.

MICROSOFT PROJECT 1 & 2

The principal objective of MS Project Management is to support project managers through the various stages of a project. Though there are various platforms, a full suite platform will support managers in areas such as uniting project planning, resource management, team collaboration, finance and billing, time tracking and reporting, so they can manage projects from quote to invoice.

In dealing daily with member companies, the consensus is that a large majority are utilising MS Project to some degree. However, like with a lot of software, people are quick to acknowledge that they may not be utilising it as effectively as they can and not to its capacity. Our courses give students an excellent grounding in the fluent use of MS Project and the basic principles that underpin the critical path method.



Conor Greham, Business Development Executive, CIF Learning and Development.

MICROSOFT POWER BI

MS Power BI is a business intelligence platform that provides non-technical business users with the knowledge for analysing, aggregating visualising and sharing data. Power BI's interface is intuitive to Excel users and able to integrate with other Microsoft products. This results in a versatile multi-purpose tool that, once basic training has been completed, can add value to any business by eliminating the need to invest in proprietary third-party software.

Power BI Essentials Beginners course focuses on the Power BI Desktop, with some time also spent in the Power Query Editor. The emphasis is on the visuals in the desktop and the course will also touch on publishing to the PowerBI service at the end of the day, but all learning will be completed on the desktop.

Power BI Essentials covers the essential skills needed to begin using the Power BI Desktop to produce visual reports and learn how to bring data into the Power Query Editor to transform into Power BI. Students will learn how to bring data from an Excel file or CSV file into the Power Query Editor, and then load it into Power BI, while discussing the essentials of data cleansing. Students will also learn some basic Dax formulae, along with gaining an understanding of the data model.

Introduction to Power BI Desktop is a natural progression from the Power BI Essentials one-day course, with a focus on three fundamental areas within Power BI. Power query, data visualisation and data model. Over two days, students will complete a module on automated data preparation, extracting data, transforming it, creating data visualisations and building data models.

Due to the interactive nature and workshop focus on all the above MS courses, there is a maximum of 12 delegates per course. **C**

For queries on any of the above courses, call Conor Greham by phone, 01 406 6031, or email, cgreham@cif.ie

CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS SKILLNET ASSISTS WITH SISK 'LEAN TRANSFORM' PROGRAMME

Managing available resources effectively is key to success, particularly when it comes to upskilling staff to take on new challenges. John Sisk and Son has engaged Construction Professionals Skillnet training as part of the €2.4m lean transformation of its operations.

As part of its long-term planning process, John Sisk & Son is investing €2.4m in a company-wide Lean Transform programme.

"Productivity is at the heart of our lean programme," explains Richard Warner, Head of Strategy and Performance – Ireland & Europe, John Sisk and Son. "The productivity imperative comes into sharp focus in the context of current skills shortages. We believe that the construction industry must achieve a step-change in productivity. By eliminating waste and improving productivity and competitiveness in the industry, we can help to attract continued inward investment from high-tech multinationals, as well as supporting the delivery of infrastructure and housing.

"It is one of our key objectives that we are recognised as the industry leader in Ireland in the implementation of lean thinking and principles. We are driven to eliminate unnecessary waste and improve

CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS SKILLNET TRAINING FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

The Construction Professionals Skillnet offers an open programme of funded training. Examples of courses that will be on offer for 2021 are CIOB Certificate/Diploma in Construction Site Management, BIM Essentials, Digital Delivery for Site Workers, Management Development training for SMEs, Excel for Construction, Communication Skills for Safety Officers, Internal Auditor training, etc. Details of all courses can be found at www.cpskillnet.ie

The CP Skillnet also provides funding for in-company training. This is a significant resource for construction companies and should be used by any construction company providing training for their staff.

For further information on this, contact Liz Carroll, Network Manager, Construction Professionals Skillnet, by phone, 087 932 3749, or email cpskillnet@cif.ie.



Winifred Ryan, Training Manager, John Sisk & Son.

productivity in both our site operations and 'back of house' support operations."

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

In addition, Sisk's strategy of continued expansion in Europe requires its workforce to be versatile, client-centric and fully equipped to deliver real value in a rapidly evolving industry, continually pushing the boundaries in finding innovative solutions to the challenges that construction faces every day.

To this end, Sisk has engaged with Enterprise Ireland (EI) to develop a tailored Lean Transform programme to be delivered over two years. The lean transformation programme is geared towards ensuring that all staff are skilled in applying lean tools, techniques and thinking to all aspects of the business. This led to Sisk working with the Construction Professionals Skillnet (CP Skillnet) on the related training that helps to upskill its staff. The Skillnet part-funded some of the training provided in 2020.

LEAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Sisk lean strategy and training programme is geared towards having a robust structure of lean skills in key positions of the business in Ireland, Europe and the UK. This includes training its head of strategy in Ireland and the UK to 'black belt' level, and senior project team members to 'green belt' level to manage improvement and efficiency projects. These will be supported by staff of all disciplines completing 'yellow belt' level to support the delivery of the improvement project and foster a culture of lean and continuous improvement throughout the business.

The key learning objectives of the training are to provide staff with the skills to:

- Understand lean tools and principles
- Develop new problem-solving skills
- Develop practical know-how on how lean can be integrated into corporate and project management systems
- Identify opportunities for savings and reduction of waste
- Initiate, manage and deliver and improvement and efficiency projects
- Demonstrate new and improved standards for standard work processes.

CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS SKILLNET SUPPORT

"The funding we received from CP Skillnet has allowed us to make better use of our resources and run two cohorts of the five-day 'Lean Six Sigma Green Belt,'" says Winifred Ryan, Training Manager, John Sisk & Son. "Since September 2020, we have put 15 people from operational and support functions through the training.

"It is our goal to build a community of process improvement in the organisation, based on respect, trust and open collaboration with all partners, supply chain and clients. We want all our clients to feel that we are delivering the value they require. We also want our supply chain to feel that by working with Sisk, they have a partner that provides them with the best opportunity to operate a sustainable business into the future. Going into 2021, we will be working with the CP Skillnet to continue to roll out the training across the business," Winifred Ryan concludes. **C**

DCT'S EVOLVING DIGITAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ROLE? REMOTELY MANAGING PROJECTS



Mark Keenan,
Operations
Manager, Digital
Construction
Technologies.



The Digital
Construction
Technologies team.

As Operations manager at Digital Construction Technologies (DCT), Mark Keenan is in a new role at the forefront of digital construction. DCT provides a broad range of services across the digital construction sector, including Digital Information Management (DIM), BIM consulting, ISO 19650 certification, model production, and traditional 2D services.

ABOUT DCT

Established in 2018, Digital Construction Technologies (DCT), has seen a growing passion for virtual design and construction morph into an award winning global virtual design and construction (VDC) consultancy. With strategic locations around the world including, Ireland (Dublin), Croatia (Zagreb) and Argentina (Obera) and with more than 30 employees, DCT's digital solutions for construction projects enhance the design, collaboration and communication process of a project whilst improving the strategic decision-making process and developing the client's digital capabilities.

DIGITAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Mark Keenan is responsible for Digital Information Management (DIM) within DCT. DIM supports the implementation of BIM processes and guidelines for all projects. After completing an electrical apprenticeship Mark continued on to further his education by completing a degree in electrical service design engineering and a postgraduate diploma in Collaborative BIM both awarded by TU Dublin.

Upon completion of his educational studies, Mark co-founded and managed a successful electrical contracting company, working alongside some of Ireland's leading contractors, leading him to collaborate with Digital Construction Technologies on a commercial project.

Mark adds, "From working with Joseph Mady, CEO & Founder of DCT Group on a project, and



with my passion for digital technology, I knew when the opportunity arose to join DCT Group I couldn't pass it up. DCT Group are leading the way in BIM and virtual design across Ireland and I'm looking forward to assisting them in further expanding the business, entering new markets and improving business operations for the group".

WHY DIM IS CHANGING THE FUTURE OF CONSTRUCTION

Mark explains the roles of Digital Information Management.

DCT Group has seen a sharp rise in the number of queries relating to DIM since the beginning of COVID-19 earlier this year. With the increased demand in remote construction management, DCT Group saw an opening to improve their service offering and have since developed their DIM division to answer the needs of the evolving industry. Mark is now leading this new "in demand" service offering across DCT with many of the company's blue chip and data centre clients already implementing this technology across their projects in Europe.

This unique virtual construction service offers data management across the project while adding value to project teams by enhancing information exchange, and overall communication between project teams, therefore avoiding delays and problems on site.

"At DCT, we take our client's through the entire life-cycle of a project with our DIM service offering. DCT participates in the full project life-cycle, with key benefits to the client, including improved project processes and delivery from design stage



throughout to construction stage and onward to final project handover/facility operation" adds Mark Keenan. DCT's DIM service aims to take a project from concept design to operational phase using the latest technologies and innovative workflows. The DIM processes include document creation, document enforcement, BIM kick off meetings, weekly BIM discussions, information collation, federation of multi discipline models, model audits, clash detection and the assignment of responsibility to identify the scope/ownership gaps across project elements and teams.

COVID -19

Mark explained how DCT has supported a number of construction companies during the COVID-19 pandemic with a digital

strategic plan. Mark comments; "When a crisis like the coronavirus pandemic hits an organisation, its executives need to assess the impact on their business both immediately and over the long term. An organisation's capabilities are the fuel that drives the engine, allowing their company to create value for customers. A crisis may put a strain on their capabilities — and it may also require that they prioritise different capabilities than usual. Supply chain and production capabilities will be one of these items that they prioritise, since international supply chains are being disrupted".

Employees' typical levels of performance and productivity will also be affected by the move to home offices. The implementation and utilisation of new technologies is more than applying a new piece of hardware to the existing processes within their

organisation and hope that this will solve all the issues. During the pandemic DCT supported businesses with re-evaluating the company's current business processes and procedures to improve their digital capabilities should something of the same magnitude occur again.

To allow for growth, a number of elements are required to be aligned to ensure such change can occur. It is beneficial for an organisation to ask themselves what it is that they wish to achieve by adopting new technologies within their organisation? This allows our clients to begin the process with a clear picture, or road map of where they want to go and assists them in making clear and informed decisions to get from where they currently are to where they aim to be.

2021

We are currently putting the 2021 strategy in place; we have attained all of 2020's goals with the transition to new offices, a new DCT United football team and expansion into new sectors. Our vision for 2021 at DCT will include the hiring of additional staff, expanding our services throughout Europe and North America; solidifying our position as the global leaders in digital construction. DCT will add additional services to their ever expanding portfolio in 2021 and an exciting press release is due for release in early 2021, but that's under wraps for now. **C**



ASSESSING THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR'S COVID RECOVERY

TOM MOLONEY, Managing Director, Construction Information Services (CIS), details the levels of pipeline and active construction over the period covering Q3, 2020, and offers some insight into recovery in the period immediately following the March Covid lockdown.

Our analysis shows a 19% decline in pipeline activity in the non-residential sector in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) in Q3 of this year compared to the same period in 2019. In particular, the commercial and hospitality sectors have declined 23% decline in comparison to Q3 2019. In Northern Ireland (NI), all sectors outside of medical and commercial have shown a significant decline. Overall figures, however, show a positive increase in investment due to the €500m regeneration proposals known as Tribeca Belfast.

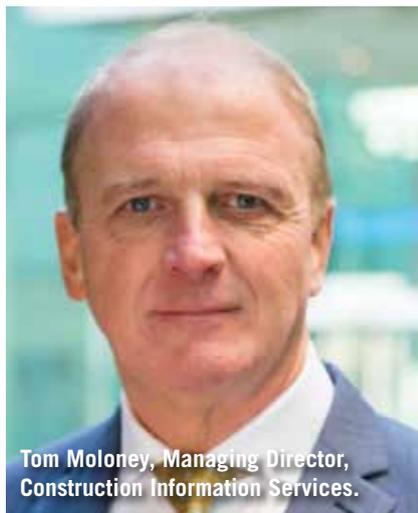
In the residential sector, pipeline investment in ROI shows a massive 50% increase to €17bn, when compared to the same period last year, representing over 15,000 housing units. NI shows a 12% fall in investment value over the same period and a 3% decline in the number of housing units planned in the period at 2,351. Project starts in ROI in the non-residential sector are in overall decline. The value of projects started in Q3 fell by 21% over the same period last year, and the overall number of projects started fell by 28% to 382.

The medical sector was the only sector to show an increase in the period, rising by 41% over Q3 2019 to €127m. Commercial, retail and hospitality project starts fell by 33%, and education projects starts by 50%. In NI, the decline in the value of non-residential project starts was less pronounced at 9%. However, the number of projects started overall fell by 23%.

In the residential sector, project starts in ROI fell by 2% in terms of value and the number of projects. But overall, the number of residential units commencing increased by 2%. In NI, residential project starts increased across the board from Q3 2019 in terms of value, number of projects and number of residential units.

COMMERCIAL, RETAIL & HOSPITALITY

This sector in ROI showed an overall decline of 23% in pipeline investment over the same period last year. Investment in hotels fell by 21% over the period, although



Tom Moloney, Managing Director, Construction Information Services.

the number of hotel beds increased to 882 – a rise of 13%. Investment in bars and restaurants bucked the trend, rising by 16% over Q3 2019. Project starts fell by one-third over Q3 2019 to €311m, representing a 19% drop in overall floor area. Pipeline investment in NI rose significantly over Q3 2019 on the back of the €500m Tribeca Belfast project. Starts, however, were down by nearly 50% over the same period last year.

MEDICAL

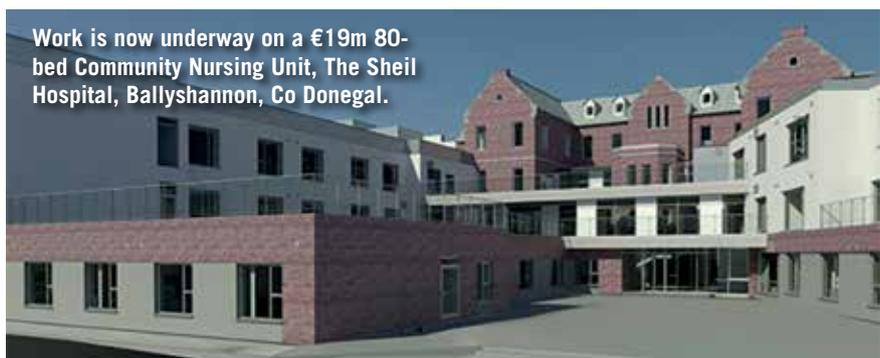
Plans approved in the medical sector in ROI in Q3 2020 fell by 30% over the same period in 2019 to €185m. The nursing home sector accounted for nearly €100m of this figure, with 912 new nursing home beds planned. Primary care centres also contributed significantly to the pipeline.

Project starts remained steady this quarter and in comparison to Q3 2019, but overall investment rose by 41% to €127m, boosted by investment in primary care centres, which amounted to over €78m. In NI, although the number of projects granted planning permission fell by 18% to 14 over Q3 2019, the value of investment rose significantly by 344% to €45m. There were no significant project starts in the medical sector during this quarter in NI.

EDUCATION

Plans granted in ROI fell in value by by 9% in Q3 2020, compared to Q3 2019, with 158 projects getting the go-ahead. In the higher education sector investment fell by 35% to €60m, while in the schools' sector, investment rose by 57% to €66m. Project starts were down significantly over the same period as last year, falling by 50% to €60m, with the number of projects started falling to 87 – down 36%. The higher education sector bore the brunt of the decline in investment, falling by 84% to €11m. Plans approved in the education sector in NI fell in value by 44% to €31m, with only 15 projects in the pipeline compared to Q3 2019. Fourteen new projects started in this sector, which is a significant increase on the same period last year. But overall new starts remain on a low trajectory after 2018. **C**

CIS provides comprehensive, researched, verified and real-time information on all building projects throughout Ireland north and south. For more information call: 01 299 9200, or email, sales@cisireland.com



Work is now underway on a €19m 80-bed Community Nursing Unit, The Sheil Hospital, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal.

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Department of Education and Skills



TIMBER PRICE INCREASES SET TO CONTINUE INTO 2021

The global construction sector has seen a substantial increase in the price of raw materials in 2020, and in particular in the price of timber.

Fuelled mostly by an explosion in demand for timber in the US housing market, the Covid-19 crisis, and a subsequent massive upsurge in demand in the global DIY market, timber prices have risen steeply since the end of Q1 2020. Licensing issues related to the felling of Irish trees and Brexit stockpiling have added to problems in the market, resulting in a pile-up of supply pressures hitting the market.

Irish construction consumes an estimated 625,000 cubic metres of sawn timber per annum. This figure excludes panel products such as OSB and plywood, which are also increasing in price.

Timber is a commodity, and as such, it is subject to the laws of demand and supply. The market is cyclical, and under normal conditions, timber prices tend to increase or decrease in relatively small increments of about 5%.

It is estimated that since Q1 of this year, the price of timber has increased by an unprecedented 35%. It is expected that the cost of timber will continue to increase in the new year, but at a less incremental rate before possibly settling again in Q3 of 2021.

NATIVE TIMBER ISSUES

The supply of native timber in Ireland has been hampered by delays in the issuing of licences due to a backlog of appeals.

The number of forestry appeals received by the Forestry Appeals Committee (FAC) by the start of November 2020 was 689 appeals. This was almost three times the amount received in 2017 and 2018 combined.

The passing of the Forestry (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2020 by the Dáil in October will facilitate the processing of these appeals. However, this will take time, and when the supply of native timber returns to normal, it will still be subject to market prices.

Speaking about the licencing crisis in Irish forestry, Clodagh O'Reilly, Sales & Supply Chain Director, Coillte, says, "The building blocks are now in place to resolve the recent licencing crisis. However, we have a way to travel before the backlog of licencing or appeals is dealt with. There has been a step-change in the volume of new licencing and appeal hearings. This



Timber frame manufacturers have been hit hard by the price hikes.

has allowed the industry to keep moving, albeit not at the level required to operate normally. It is likely to be Q1 before the backlog is cleared."

TIMBER FRAME SECTOR

Timber frame manufacturers have been hit hard by the price hikes. Most timber used in the timber frame industry in Ireland is graded softwood imported from producers in Scandinavia and mainland Europe. These producers have started to export large quantities of timber to the US market, which has driven up prices.

John Desmond, Managing Director, Cygnum Timber Frame, and Vice-Chair of the Irish Timber Frame Manufacturers Association (ITFMA) says that the timber frame manufacturing industry has now passed the point where it can continue to carry these price increases.

"The building sector experienced substantial price increases for almost all timber products this year, and suppliers, such as builders providers, have already passed on these increases."

"To remain viable, the timber frame

industry has also needed to pass on price increases. Traditionally, timber frame has been very stable compared to other build methods, but unfortunately, the timber market has hit a perfect storm in the past few months."

Structural timber accounts for about 21% to 25% of the sales price of a timber frame house. Timber frame accounted for approximately 5,400, or 35%, of new house units built in Ireland last year. This is about 24% of the overall 21,241 residential units built during the year.

"It is imperative that timber frame manufacturers engage openly with their clients on the impact of these increases to ensure trust and confidence in the industry are maintained."

OUTLOOK

While some supply issues will be addressed in the coming months, and there would appear to be a recent softening in US demand, growing demand from China for European timber means that purchasers will continue to pay a premium for timber for the foreseeable future. **C**

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CERTIFICATE IN CURTAIN WALL AND GLAZING INSTALLER COURSE

WHAT IS THE COURSE?
The Curtain Walling & Glazing Installer course will give learners experience of various curtain wall systems, using common and specialist tools, and teach them about the importance of teamwork in the context of installing commercial glazing systems.

A curtain wall is a non-structural outer covering of a building. An example is a large section of glass fitted into aluminium frames, which is now standard on many new large commercial buildings. These glass units are usually fabricated in a factory and transported to a building site where they are then fitted to the outside of the new building.

A curtain wall installer's job is to fix the framework to the building and then fit the glass into this framework. As many of these buildings are large, multi-storey office or apartment blocks being able to work outdoors and at height is important for workers in this sector.

COURSE BACKGROUND

City of Dublin Education Training Board (CDETb) and Ballyfermot Training Centre developed the course in conjunction with the CIF and a number of curtain walling and glazing specialists to secure a new pool

of workers for the sector and to provide a certified qualification for people working at curtain walling and glazing installation.

COURSE MODULES

This NFQ Level 4 qualification, including CAD 1 certification within the course, is aimed at those who work as installers of curtain walling systems. The standards cover the most important aspects of the job, which include:

- Health and Safety Training
- Communication and Teamwork
- Identify Systems of Curtain Walling
- Material and Fenestration Handling
- Install Curtain Wall Systems
- Install infill units to Curtain Walling
- Site Preparation and Organisation

Course learning

Learners will learn how to handle safely, move, and store glass as well as being taught practical skills such how to measure, level and plumb curtain walling, which will help them develop an eye for the job to be able to make judgements confidently on-the-job about tasks at hand.

They will also learn how to use equipment such as drills and lifting devices and how to fabricate and fix materials. One key area of the course will focus on developing learners' teamwork skills,

whereby learners will work in teams and will be required to complete a mix of teamwork tasks.

The course will also include instruction on working at height as part of the health and safety training.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There will be a number of courses run across the year. Applicants require no qualifications as this is an entry-level course to the curtain walling sector of the construction industry. The course would also suit experienced construction workers looking to diversify and gain experience and qualifications in this specialist sector.

Course location: Ten weeks in-class learning at Ballyfermot Training Centre/10 weeks of on-site training.

Course duration: 20 weeks.

Recruitment method: Interview **C**

To apply for the Curtain Walling & Glazing Installer course, visit www.ballyfermottrainingcentre.ie/course/certificate-in-curtain-wall-glazing-installer and follow the instructions. This is a rotation course, which means places are on offer throughout the year. Check the website for details.

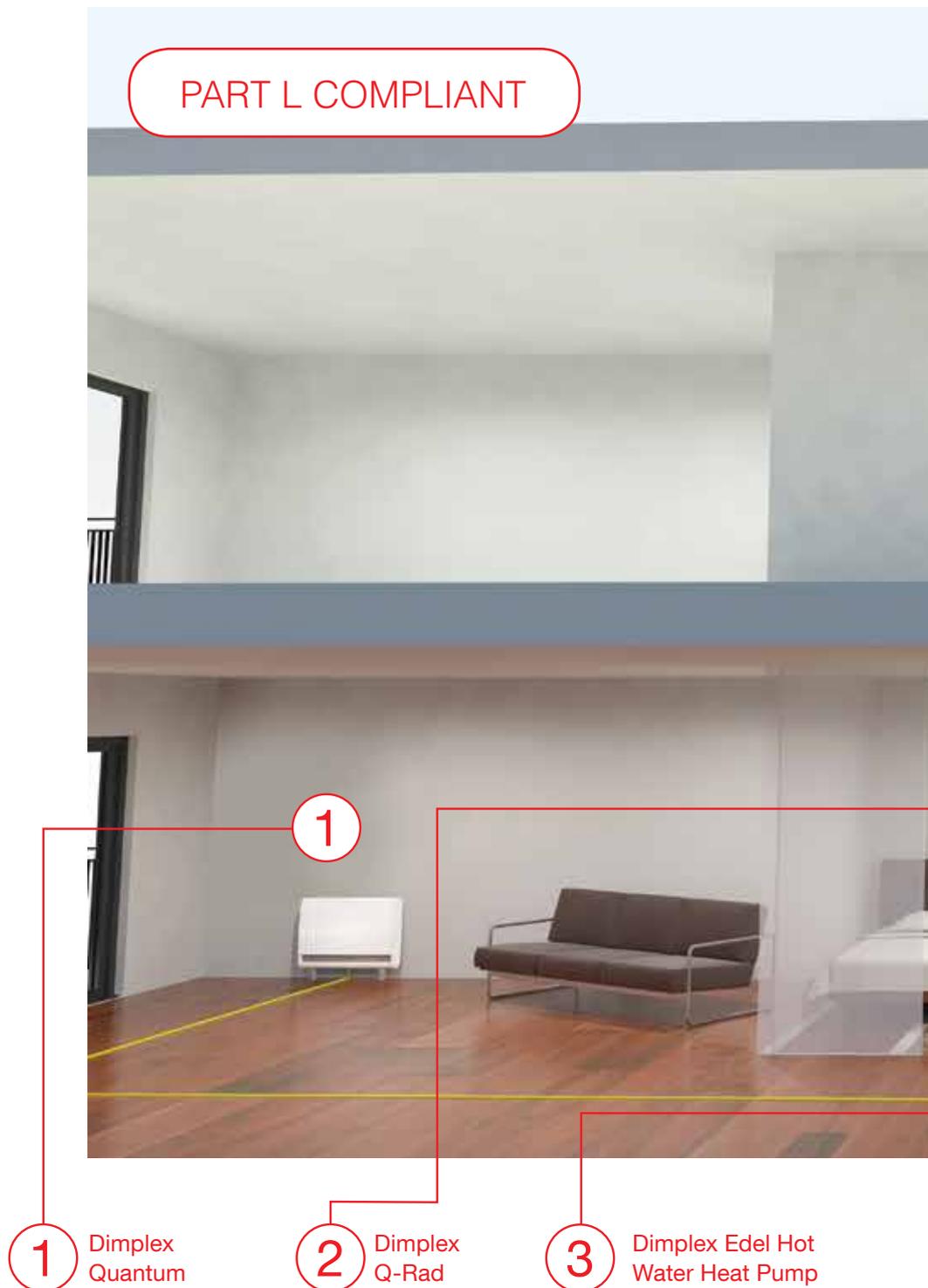
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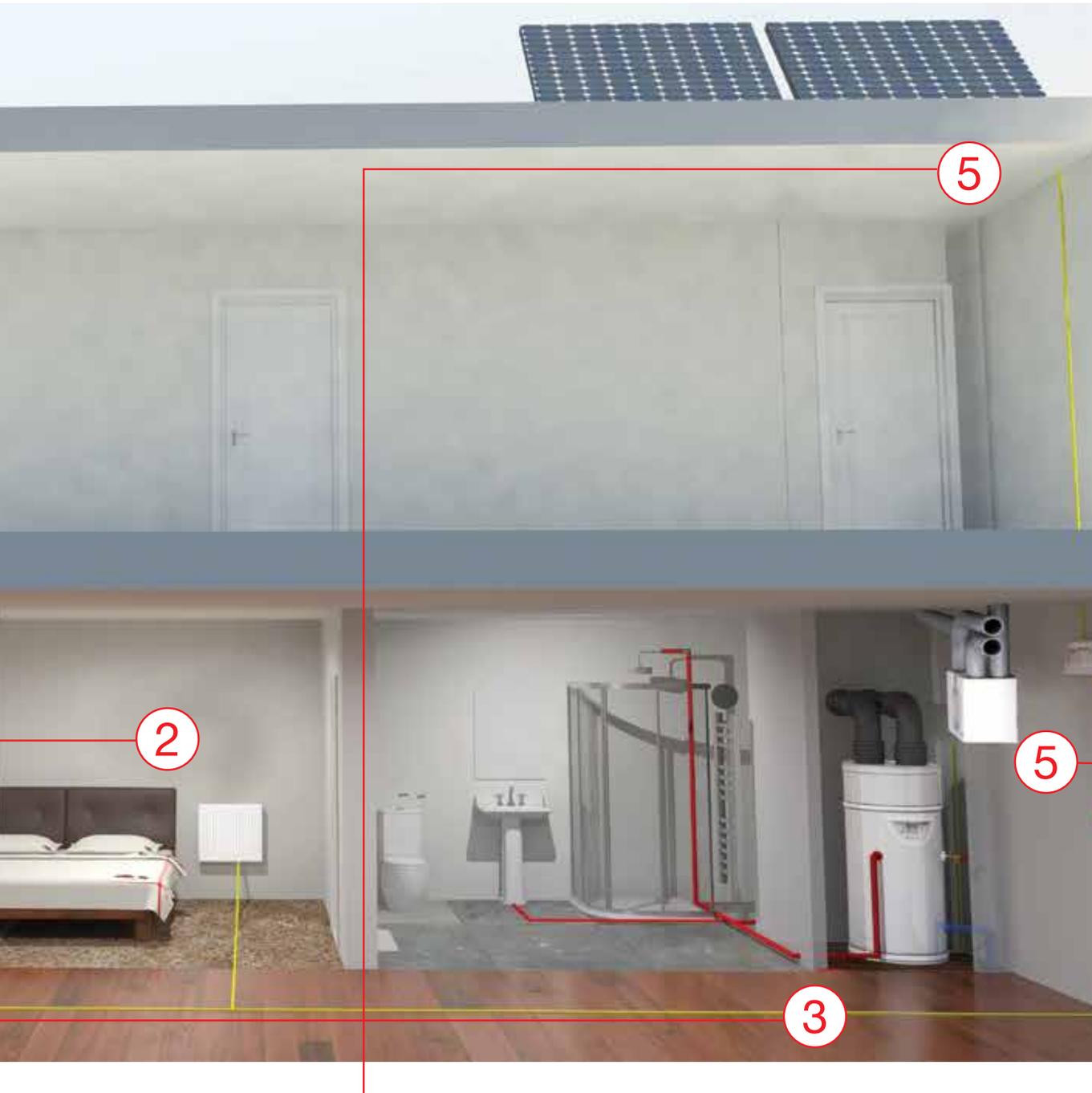
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2021 LOOKS A LOT MORE POSITIVE THAN ONCE THOUGHT

LIAM GLYNN, Senior Recruitment Consultant, Azon, writes that as sites recommenced in early January 2020, the outlook for the year could not have been any different.

At the beginning of 2020, the construction industry was in a very healthy position, benefiting from year on year growth across predominantly residential and commercial projects. After a sustained period of substantial employment growth, new entrant numbers were beginning to level off. The requirement to attract skilled foreign labour to Ireland became ever more prevalent as the industry edged closer to capacity. At the time, staffing sites seemed to be the biggest problem facing the sector.

HOW THINGS CHANGED

Come mid-March, the world seemed to be falling apart before us with no end in sight. Projects put on hold, thousands laid off, and foreign direct investment withdrawing from the economy, it was a frightening time for all of us.

But as the dust came to settle around July, with Covid-19 cases on the decline and restrictions eased, we saw substantial improvements across the industry as contractors gained some renewed confidence.

BUDGET 2021 – NATIONAL ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE BOOST

2019 saw a decline in civil and infrastructure output. New tenders were in decline, and some civil engineering contractors were becoming increasingly quiet domestically.

Thankfully, the tide looks to have turned as the Government has come to the table this year with a sizable stimulus package in Budget 2021.

Road-building projects will be a crucial part of civils construction in 2021. We've already noted improvements under the National Roads Programme, with works beginning on the much-needed Dunkettle Interchange upgrade in Cork. This represents a €215m investment by the State set to deliver a free-flowing interchange on one of the busiest junctions in the country. Furthermore, progress will be made on the N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramogue in Co Roscommon, the N69 Listowel Bypass in Co Kerry, and the N59 Bypass in Co Galway.



Liam Glynn, Senior Recruitment Consultant, Azon,

HOUSING, SCHOOLS, AND HEALTHCARE

Another big focus of Budget 2021 is to tackle Ireland's shortcomings around social housing, schools, and healthcare. Design and build public tenders are to increase substantially in the coming year. Contractors targeting social housing are set to be busy well beyond 2021. The Department for Housing has been allocated €5.2bn to tackle the chronic shortage throughout the country.

An ambitious target of just under 9,000 homes is to be built. A further €700m worth of contracts are currently out for tender from the Department of Education.

It is envisaged that up to 30 new design and build schools projects will be on-site in the year 2021.

In healthcare, there is just under €500m in funding for an additional 2,600 beds across the public healthcare system. Whether the targets are achieved or not, the boost here for activity and employment is immense.

PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

With more and more people working from home, we all knew that the commercial property sector was in trouble.

Demand for hotels, office space and specific areas of retail has fundamentally changed since the arrival of Covid-19. However, thanks to certain areas of the private sector, such as data centres, pharmaceuticals, and residential developments, private sector construction should continue to perform well.

DATA CENTRES

According to Host in Ireland, Ireland holds 25% of the data centre market in Europe. We continue to hear news of massive investment in data centres, such as the new tech giant Tik Tok planning to build a €420m facility over the coming years. Contractors are busy on sites in Clonee, Drogheda, and Grangecastle for some of the largest multinational tech giants in the world.

The construction of these data centres is big business for the Irish construction industry. It is estimated that data centres will generate €4.5bn worth of foreign direct investment by 2025; this is a crucial industry that will assist in keeping the market moving.

FINAL THOUGHTS

2020 has been a year of severe economic damage and general uncertainty for the future. But some sectors, such as construction, look set to emerge much better off than others.

Perhaps it's a combination of Ireland's fundamental societal issues around housing, nursing homes, and hospital capacity that will drive the industry forward over the coming years.

Just as importantly, the strong presence of the large MNCs, who continue to expand their operations and invest in new facilities across the technology and pharmaceutical sectors, is keeping Irish contractors busy and employment numbers up.

All in all, perhaps 2021 looks a lot more positive than once thought. **C**

NO CONSTRUCTION WORKER OR THEIR FAMILY SHOULD BE ALONE IN A CRISIS

BILL HILL, CEO, Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity, writes about how the charity is working to address the mental wellbeing of construction workers

As well as the word 'unprecedented', we are now hearing the words 'mental health' every day. That's good because it means people are talking about the issues. But I was truly saddened to see the recent data published by the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS), which found that male suicides are now at their highest in two decades and suicides peaked in the 45- to 55-year-old age category.

As a male-dominated industry, we know that construction workers will account for a considerable proportion of these figures. I hardly dare think about what that means for this year, and I hate to use the word 'figures'. These are people, and everyone that takes their own life leaves behind parents, children, brothers, sisters and friends. The ripple is far-reaching and devastating.

A HIGHLY VULNERABLE GROUP

We already know that construction workers are on the highly vulnerable list. A lack of job security can contribute significantly to poor mental health. When they do get work, it can be away from home in an unfamiliar area without their normal support network of family and friends. Working long hours, trying to keep everyone happy, including family, their boss, the main contractor and the client, often to extremely tight deadlines, can simply be too much.

I have said before that I have sleepless nights trying to think of how we can get our services to individuals in crisis before they take their life. I am convinced that if given the opportunity, we could manage to turn some away from suicide.

Despite the pandemic, I am proud to say that our charity has been able to respond to the needs of the industry.

LIGHTHOUSE 24/7 FREE HELPLINE

Calls to our 24/7 helpline increased by 56% at the outbreak of the pandemic, and our caseload has almost doubled. 48% of the cases we manage are in the 40 to 60-year age group and from lower-income job categories in the sector. This is the most vulnerable group. Many have had a lifetime of physical labour, and their bodies are failing, but they need to keep working to support their families. Retirement for them is another lifetime away.

A crucial element of our charity strategy is to provide more pro-active interventions to support the industry's mental wellbeing. This includes our free and confidential 24/7 Construction Industry Helpline and supporting app. We have also ensured the widespread availability of free construction-focused training programmes. These range from hour-long interactive wellbeing sessions through to the full two-day Mental Health First Aider course. This will ensure that companies have access to a robust wellbeing strategy to support every level of their organisation from the boots on the ground workforce through to senior management.

One of the key findings of our recently published 2019 'Impact Report' was that 62% of emergency financial grants were to pay for daily living costs, paying bills and clearing rent arrears. Financial wellbeing is one of the key factors affecting mental health and the introduction of 'bang on budget' financial management sessions, aim to address these issues directly.

IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY

The fallout of Covid-19 has also seen an increasing number of



Bill Hill, CEO, Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity.

“ A LACK OF JOB SECURITY CAN CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO POOR MENTAL HEALTH. ”

redundancies across the industry, so we have now also added two sessions aimed at improving employability, 'At the Interview' and 'CV Workshop'.

Our charity is hugely grateful for the generosity of the industry that allows all our charitable work to be free to the workforce, but it would be great if we could reduce the cases by finding ways to better retain the productivity of these vulnerable skilled workers.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of technology in our industry. So perhaps focussing on retraining this age group on working with new machinery and technology might lower the calls to our helpline and give this workforce another 20 years of working life and a retirement to look forward to.

Our mission is that no construction worker or their family should be alone in a crisis and being able to respond so quickly to the needs of our construction community means that we really can make a difference. **C**

If you or anyone you know is struggling, you can reach out for free and confidential support through our 24/7 Construction Industry helpline on 1800 939 122.

Skilled Utilities Operator Traineeship

Course Content

Phase 1	Weeks 1 to 12	<p>Simulated site training at Mount Lucas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction, Safepass, Manual Handling, First Aid • Abrasive Wheels Training, Health and Safety Awareness • Location of Underground Services • Concreting & Kerbing • Signing, Lighting & Guarding • Slinger Signaller <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Dumper • Confined Space Training, Asbestos Awareness • Emergency Situations / Rescue Training • Working at Heights • Water Hygiene
Phase 2	Weeks 13 to 21	<p>Organised Work Experience with Civil Contractors in the Industry</p>
Phase 3	Weeks 22 to 31	<p>Simulated site training at Mount Lucas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating and maintaining an efficient, effective, safe and secure environment in utilities network construction • Install equipment for safe working on sites and on the highway • Locate and avoid supply apparatus • Excavate & maintain holes & trenches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstate excavations & pavement surfaces after utility network construction • Operate powered tools and equipment for routine and predictable requirements
Phase 4	Weeks 32 to 40	<p>Organised Work Experience with Civil Contractors in the Industry</p>
Phase 5	Weeks 41 to 50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By electrofusion processes ✓ By butt fusion processes ✓ By mechanical means • Install water mains • Conduct pressure and soundness testing • Restore water network components to operational condition by repair • Organised Work Experience with Civil Contractors in the Industry <p>Other Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary Works • 360 Excavator • Teleporter

Training is fully funded
Typical cost of Phase 1 individual training: approx. €7,000

Now accepting applications for January 2021!

The Skilled Utilities Operator Traineeship is a 13-month training programme which will provide you with the skills and knowledge you need to deliver infrastructure for utilities companies. Upon successful completion of the Traineeship, you will achieve a **CABWI Level 2 Diploma in Network Construction Operations – Water (Main Layer)** as well as many essential industry-recognised training qualifications. In order to participate on this programme, you must be at least 18 years old, be reliable, have a strong work ethic and be willing to work as part of a team in an outdoor environment.

National Construction Training Centre, Mount Lucas
Simulated site training will take place at the National Construction Training Centre, Mount Lucas, Daingean, Co. Offaly. The facilities available at the Centre are specifically designed for all aspects of the course.

Accommodation / Transport:

If you do not live locally, a list of accommodation options in the area is available. Transport from local towns such as Tullamore, Portlaoise etc is provided by Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board.

For more information:

John Kelly, Manager
National Construction Training Centre, Mount Lucas,
Daingean, Co. Offaly, R35 XW10

Email: jkelly@mountlucas.ie
Phone: (057) 9362508 / (085) 8598412
Website: www.mountlucas.ie

Your Opportunity to join a growing industry!

UTILITY INDUSTRY SPECIALIST TRAINEESHIP OFFERS ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO ADVANCE CAREERS

Despite the challenges presented by Covid-19, the first group of trainees are just completing the inaugural Utility Industry Specialist Traineeship programme at the National Construction Training Centre in Mount Lucas, Co Offaly.

The Utility Industry Specialist Traineeship programme at Mount Lucas, Co Offaly, which has the full backing of the CIF, Irish Water, and utility contractors, began in January of 2020, and was able to recommence following the March Covid-19 shutdown of the construction sector.

The training programme is designed to upskill workers and train new entrants in best utilities construction practices.

It was developed and is delivered by the National Construction Training Centre in consultation with the CIF and some of Ireland's leading infrastructure contractors, as well as utility providers. It is designed to give participants specialised training in a broad range of aspects involved in delivering and maintaining crucial national infrastructure. The intention is to create a pipeline of skilled people and to upskill existing workers to deliver on projects in the 'Project Ireland 2040' programme.

The traineeship involves intensive training at both the National Construction Training Centre in Mount Lucas and 'on the job' with contractors working in the sector. It is fully funded, with no additional cost to employers for the training. Participants will be trained in the following areas:

- Safe Pass
- Abrasive wheels
- Manual handling
- Confined space
- Plant operation (forward-tipping dumper, 360 excavator, telescopic handler)
- Location of underground services
- Signing, lighting and guarding of roadworks
- Installation of pipes in a controlled environment to simulate a public road
- Butt-fusion and electro-fusion of pipes
- Leak detection
- Pipe repair
- Swabbing and commissioning methods
- Introduction to formwork and steel fixing
- Groundwater control and temporary works.

John Kelly, Centre Manager, Mount Lucas, says that the programme is a response to the large investment planned in water infrastructure in the coming years and to provide a pathway into the industry for young people. While the skills exist to do the work, they have never been certified.

"There has never been a qualification attached to the skills required to install and replace pipework until now," John Kelly explains. "Upon successful completion of the traineeship, successful trainees will achieve a CABWI Level-2 Diploma in Network Construction Operations – Water (Main Layer), as well as attaining many essential industry-recognised training qualifications.

"This is an on- and off-the-job traineeship, similar to other traineeship models. It is not just about installing pipes. The course covers installing mains, pressure-testing and assessing the best way to join pipes in different scenarios, and the range of skills needed to work in the water industry.

"It is designed to attract new people in and upskill people who have been in the industry for a number of years," John Kelly adds.

Fergus Collins, Head of Capital Services, Irish Water, says, "This



The Skilled Utilities Operator Development Committee and dignitaries at the programme launch in early 2020.



Current trainees on site in Mount Lucas.

idea arose from Irish Water's safety forum and is a great initiative on three fronts; it provides a route into the industry for young people, it supports the continual drive to improve safety by ensuring that workers are competent, and it ensures improvements in quality of output. Irish Water is fully supportive of the initiative."

Sean Mannion, SHEQ Manager, Ward & Burke Construction and a member of the CIF Liaison Committee, says, "The traineeship is providing a firm foundation for young persons to enter the construction industry and gain a recognised qualification in utilities. The industry fully supports the traineeship to ensure the candidates gain valuable work experience with contractors delivering work for clients."

Dermot Carey, Director, Safety and Training, CIF, says, "The programme is also open to school-leavers. It is a great new initiative to offer young people a pathway into the construction sector and to a rewarding career. The successful candidates will be much in demand in the sector. CIF would encourage any young person who has an interest in this area to enquire about the programme, in addition to employers who wish to upskill their existing personnel." **C**

The next Utility Industry Specialist Traineeship programme will run from January 2021. For more details visit www.mountlucas.ie



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L to r: John O'Shaughnessy, Managing Director, Clancy Construction; Karl Dieter, Chairperson, Housebuilding Summit 2020; James Benson, Director, Housing, Planning and Development; and Micheál Mahon, President, SCSL.

TACKLING THE HOUSING DEFICIT

The inaugural House Building Summit heard partnerships between industry and Government and modern methods of construction will be vital in addressing the housing deficit over the next 20 years. **ROBBIE COUSINS** reports.

The Central Bank says that some 34,000 homes will have to be built each year for the next decade just to meet demand. This was challenging for the industry without the current Covid-19 pandemic, considering new home completions have severely lagged demand since 2011. Less than 20,000 homes will be built this year, with next year looking like similar numbers.

The inaugural virtually-presented House Building Summit, which took place recently, looked at how the Government plans to address the housing deficit, what needs to change if the construction sector is to deliver the required level of housing and by what means the sector will deliver housing.

The summit was addressed by a broad range of stakeholders who have a direct impact on the Irish housing market or are well placed to provide up to the moment analysis of what is happening in the Irish housing sector. It was organised by iQuest, and the chairperson was mortgage broker and economist Karl Dieter.

MINISTERIAL ADDRESS

Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for

Housing, Local Government and Heritage, opened the summit by outlining the initiatives that the Government is pursuing to deliver new housing.

The Minister said that the theme of the summit, that of accelerating the delivery of housing with affordability at the heart of it, is something that he is very passionate about. He pointed out that the Government had introduced a range of affordability measures totalling €468m in Budget 2021.

These include:

- €110m to be ring-fenced for a new national Affordable Purchase Shared Equity Scheme and a new Cost Rental Equity Loan Facility to help deliver Cost Rental homes – both of which will begin in 2021
- €50m in Services Sites Funding, which will support the delivery of more affordable purchase and Cost Rental Homes on local authority lands
- €38m in Local Infrastructure Housing Activation funding, which will support the delivery of homes on private lands including many discounted on open market prices;
- €210m for lending under the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan which

provides a route to home ownership for those who cannot secure the necessary commercial loan, and

- €60m to be spent by the Land Development Agency in its progression of housing, including affordable homes on key strategic sites to be aided by a further investment of €1.25bn by the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) from 2021 onwards.

Minister O'Brien added that "This does not include the very valuable Help to Buy scheme, which has been extended at the rate of €30,000 to the end of 2021 at the cost of approximately €150m."

He also said that the Affordable Purchase Shared Equity Scheme will encourage the construction of more new build homes to respond to realisable demand and will support economic recovery from Covid-19 in construction and related sectors.

"It is anticipated that, over the coming years, the Affordable Purchase Shared Equity Scheme will be jointly funded and delivered in partnership with the retail banks. We are in the process of finalising the details of this scheme, including the operational structure and eligibility

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

Chairman: **Karl Deeter**, Mortgage broker and broadcaster

Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government

Jim Baneham, Director of Delivery, the Housing Agency

Hugh Brennan CEO, Ó Cualann Cohousing Alliance CLG

David Lawlor, Social/Affordable Housing Director, O'Flynn Group

Fiona Cormican, New Business Director, Clúid

Micheál Mahon, President, the SCSi

Mark McGreevy, Chief Operating Officer, Services Business & Sisk Living, John Sisk & Son (Holdings) Ltd

James Benson, Director, Housing, Planning and Development, CIF

John O'Shaughnessy, Managing Director, Clancy Construction

Daniel McLoughlin, Chief Executive, South Dublin County Council

Parag Joglekar, Head of Development, Respond Housing

John Coleman, Chief Executive, Land Development Agency

Maria Graham, Assistant Secretary, Dept. of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Stefan Lowe, Senior Executive Architect, Dublin City Council

John Downey Managing Director, Downey Planning & Architecture

Mark Farmer CEO, Cast Consulting, author of *Modernise or Die* and "MMC Champion for UK housebuilding and construction

Micheál Keohane, Director, BAM Ireland and Board Director, Modern Homes Ireland (MHI)

Michael O Sullivan Greene, Director, OLOS New Homes

Simon Crowhen, Sales Manager Geomatics, Topcon Positioning Ireland

Pat Farrell, CEO, Irish Institutional Property (IIP)

Dr Aileen Hayden, Chairperson of Threshold

Rachel Kenny, Director of Planning, An Bord Pleanála

David Browne, Managing Director, RKD and Former President, RIAI, 2018-2019.



L to r: **Pat Farrell**, CEO, Irish Institutional Property; **Rachel Kenny**, Director of Planning, An Bord Pleanála; **Karl Dieter**, Chairperson, Housing Summit 2020; and **Dr Aileen Hayden**, Chairperson, Threshold.

criteria. However, the Government has committed the necessary funding for its introduction next year.

"We know that housing need in the short- to medium-term is in the order of 30-35,000 homes per annum, reducing to 25-30,000 per annum in the long term to 2040 as the backlog clears. Increasing supply is the overarching objective, and I believe the measures we have in place will help to do just that."

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The first panel discussion of the day addressed 'Delivering affordable housing: Policy changes, practical solutions and innovative funding models'.

The panel comprised Hugh Brennan, CEO, Ó Cualann Housing Alliance; Jim Banehan, Director of Delivery, The Housing Agency; Fiona Cormican, Business Development Director, Clúid Social Housing; and David Lawlor, Social/Affordable Housing Director, O'Flynn Group.

Jim Baneham said that some of the measures discussed by Minister O'Brien would enable more people to purchase and rent new homes in a more affordable way.

"These are very important first steps in the delivery of affordable homes that will be built upon in the coming years."

Fiona Cormican welcomed the Minister's announcement saying that the focus of the approved housing body sector is to secure rental accommodation for those who cannot afford to meet market prices.

She commented, "The new cost rental equity loan, which allows us to purchase or build properties at below-market costs, is an important new step in the housing market. But, I would be concerned about too many people being driven towards affordable purchase because there is no alternative, and right now, there is no alternative. You either qualify for social housing, or you don't. So, there must be products brought to market that give

people secure rental accommodation at a rent they can afford."

O'Flynn Group's David Lawlor said that the sector needs to shift up a gear in the supply of homes across all our society.

"While ensuring we get the supply right, we need to do this in line with the National Planning Framework and focus on our low carbon future, with sustainable cities and reduced commuting for people. People who are seen as the locked-out generation are stuck in rental accommodation with too high rents because there is an undersupply. There is no one-size-fits-all solutions. There are four new supply segments being added to the current segments of private, social, PRS, and one-off housing. The new segments of affordable purchase, shared equity and affordable rental and cost rental are very important. We need to give people a choice to rent or purchase. But this all needs to be done on public and private land. If public and private sectors collaborate, we will move towards that 35,000 to 45,000 annual figure that we actually need."

Hugh Brennan welcomed anything that the Government can do to enhance the provision of affordable housing, but said, "We have to find ways to get rents down to an affordable level. This can be done with innovation and new forms of forms funding, such as private investment in social projects."

REDUCING THE COST OF CONSTRUCTION

A panel discussion on "How can the industry reduce the cost of construction?" brought together James Benson, Director, Housing, Planning and Development, CIF; John O'Shaughnessy, Managing Director, Clancy Construction; and Mark McGreevy, Chief Operating Officer, Services Business & Sisk Living, John Sisk & Son (Holdings) Ltd, to discuss what inroads are being made to cut construction costs to address the housing deficit.



Mark Farmer CEO, Cast Consulting.

Mark McGreevy said there is no simple fix to reducing costs, but in the area of procurement, there are three issues that could be addressed.

“As a contract housebuilder, Sisk has seen that there are several areas where we can reduce the costs of building a home. Three of these solutions revolve around how we procure the delivery of the contract; the approach we take to the design; and the approach we take to the construction of the homes.

“If we can reduce the complexity of the procurement process and involve the contractor earlier in the process, efficiencies will be gained, and costs will be reduced. By standardising design and creating efficiencies that come with that, you will reduce the cost of the end product. In addition, by harmonising the standards that go with producing a home, there are also costs to be reduced.

“For the past 100 years, we have been building homes in the same way we always have. Now is the chance to change that in a dramatic way over the coming years on the back of this drastic need for a large pipeline of housing. This can be achieved by moving from the traditional way of building on site to off-site factory conditions. This will reduce the cost of labour and waste, improve productivity and quality, and most importantly, it will speed up the production of these homes.”

James Benson said that housing supply has lagged behind demand for a number of years.

“In 2019, private levels of supply were the lowest since the 1970s. The residential process is complex. There are many time-consuming steps leading to unnecessary delays with added construction costs, which are ultimately borne by the buyer. In a lot of cases, the cost of building a home makes it unviable, particularly in rural areas.”

He said that delays in planning are a

major cost to construction. “In addition, conditions imposed with planning permission and density guidelines are all issues that add to the cost of building homes.”

He added that streamlining the planning system would help, but this hasn’t happened yet.

“The digitalisation of the planning system, which is due to happen by the end of next year, is a good intervention but needs to happen sooner rather than later. Covid has shown us that this must be brought forward.

“The density guidelines comprise one policy for the whole country. High-density apartments are suited to some areas, but they will not work throughout the country. Also, there is a huge onus on housebuilders for the provision of services for the community, which comes at a huge cost.”

John O’Shaughnessy said that many issues had not been dealt with at policy level and by the industry itself.

“There are huge issues around finance and costs that need to be addressed. Development contributions vary across the whole country. Why not standardise these. Irish Water is another issue. Unless the State invests in water infrastructure, we will continue to have delays. VAT also needs to be dealt with. Unless the Government takes radical action, nothing is going to change.”

Chairperson Karl Deiter asked each of the panellists for three solutions that they see as addressing the costs issue.

Mark McGreevy said a dramatic change was needed in the approach to planning and design, and there needed to be a major shift to industrial, off-site construction.

James Benson said there needs to be a route and branch review of the planning system.

“We need to introduce measures that will take away the blockages, allowing commencements to happen and increasing viability. We need to review the density guidelines and introduce more flexibility.

Finally, we need an offset or rebate scheme to allow land to be brought forward. Water and wastewater will be critical to delivery in the next 24 months.”

John O’Shaughnessy called for a shared equity scheme on a two-year trial.

“Irish water also needs funding. Projects are being delayed because of the lack of funding for Irish Water. The State should fund the servicing of zoned land. This would open up more land and reduce land costs,” he concluded.

BE PART OF THE CHANGES

In the afternoon, keynote speaker Mark Farmer, CEO, Cast Consulting, and author of ‘The Farmer Review – Modernise or Die’, gave a presentation entitled ‘Modern Methods of Construction: Be part of the changes’ in which he set out what he sees as the key issues affecting output and how builders can be part of the MMOC change.

He set out what he sees as the industry’s declining structural resiliency or increasing inability to bounce back as part of what has been the boom and bust cyclical nature of the sector.

“I believe the industry has reached a tipping point. This is down to the fact that the recovery of employment has got more difficult in each boom period. In each economic cycle, the sector sheds labour quicker, making it more difficult to grow when conditions start to improve. Several factors cause this, including an ageing workforce, a greater reliance on a workforce from overseas, and societal change where young people are choosing other career paths. Covid has now reinforced all these issues, with new Covid standard operating procedures also adding pressures in terms of numbers that can operate on construction sites.”

He said there is more pressure than ever for the sector to achieve greater efficiencies and this cannot be done using traditional building methods, adding that according to McKinsey, the biggest value shift in the coming years is anticipated in offsite construction.

“A whole lot of people currently using traditional methods of construction are going to have someone eat their dinner as a whole range of value-added services are going to move to the factory floor. Other people will come into the country to do this unless home builders decide to do it for themselves.

“I think we can deliver a new age of homebuilding in the UK and Ireland, but it needs strong and long-term leadership by policymakers and industry combined in a partnership between industry and Government,” he concluded. **C**

AMVIC IRELAND LAUNCHES A NEW PASSIVE-STANDARD ICF



Amvic Ireland, long-known for its dual-insulated concrete formwork (ICF), has thrown down the gauntlet to other construction methods, whether blockwork or light frame, introducing a new, ultra-energy efficient wall system.

“The building regs require you to achieve the NZEB-standard for thermal performance and we’ve been achieving that without any difficulty for the last three years, using our existing Amvic 300 system” said Pat Martin, director of Amvic Ireland.

Now the company has gone one further: Amvic 350 Passive is an ICF system aimed squarely at passive house development.

“We’ve been operating for the last fifteen years, supplying both self-builder and developers with our ICF system. Our current main product, Amvic 300, has 75mm of insulation on the outside, a 150mm concrete core and 75 more mm of insulation on the inside.”

It has been used in the construction of many housing schemes, both private and social, as well as apartment developments and care homes, and numerous one off private homes, all over Ireland and the UK.

Amvic’s systems deliver great energy-consumption benefits due to their use of expanded polystyrene (EPS) insulation, both internally and externally.

“We’ve just launched a new product that takes the insulation to the next level. We call it Amvic 350 passive, comprising



100 mm of insulation either side of the 150mm concrete core, all in high-density enhanced EPS,” he said.

Apart from the energy performance — the U-value is 0.15W/m²K — on-site work is aided greatly by reducing the need for wet trades, among other benefits. These include program certainty, less drying times, minimal micro-cracking on finishes and almost no snagging, all due to the solid concrete core of the structure. Amvic 350 passive also delivers almost zero thermal bridging, as well as inherent airtightness, which makes compliance with the building regulations easy to achieve.

“It forms the basis for a passive building. Any chosen finish can be applied, such



as render, brick or stone cladding, timber or metal – whatever is called for by the architect.

Pat Martin said that the demand for higher-performance construction is growing, and that it beats light frame systems due to its flexibility and the lack of long lead times.

“Our ICF is very simple to build and is available with very short lead times, meaning there is no waiting around for design and manufacture, plus it has all of the other benefits of Amvic ICF including fire resistance, structural strength, acoustic performance and rapid build and simplicity,” he said.

It is the ultimate, proven Modern Method of Construction. **C**



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PASSIVE HOUSE PERFORMANCE - TRADITIONAL BUILD COSTS

PROCKURE: ORDER MATERIALS WITH ERP INTEGRATED E-COMMERCE

Construction is the largest industry in the world, representing 13% of global GDP. This makes perfect sense when you think that the largest purchase most of us will ever make is our home. In theory, due to its size, the industry should be extraordinarily efficient; in practice, anybody who's worked with a homebuilder or contractor can describe a multitude of areas where it's not.

Aside from BIM, which involves creating a digital representation of a built space, there's been very little software innovation in the sector amongst building contractors and homebuilders over the past two decades. On a global level, the reason behind this is simple: construction companies allocate the lowest IT budgets, as a percentage of their revenue giving a measly 1.5% per annum, which is less than half the average across all other sectors according to Deloitte.

LOW CONSTRUCTION PENETRATION

When it comes to investment and innovation, if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys. This is reflected at a domestic level too in the Central Statistics Office's most recent Information Society Enterprise study which shows that only 2% of purchases in construction are made through e-Commerce, as opposed to a 36% average across all other sectors.

With the sector's low margins and volatile nature, both on international and domestic levels, it's somewhat understandable that building contractors and homebuilders haven't invested in software in the past. It can sometimes be hard justifying the typical large six-figure outlays on something unproven, when you could go out of business before



John Kyne, Prockure

seeing any return on it. This attitude towards technology creates a vicious cycle though, whereby the industry's inability to get more productive leaves it more vulnerable to economic shocks, and when those downturns start to bite, it's less able to weather them.

So, when the risks are high and the margins low, the most obvious way of improving the sector is for it to become more productive, and the easiest and most logical way of doing this is by investing in technology. While much of the current focus in construction software is on BIM, it's not a panacea because of the high up-front software licensing and training costs. At Prockure, we believe that there's much lower-hanging fruit to be picked by digitising the supply-chain, and that the first step towards improving this process is for a builder to introduce online material ordering to their company.

Figure 1: IT Budgets as a Percentage of Revenue by Sector



Source: Technology Budgets: From Value Preservation to Value Creation / Deloitte Insights

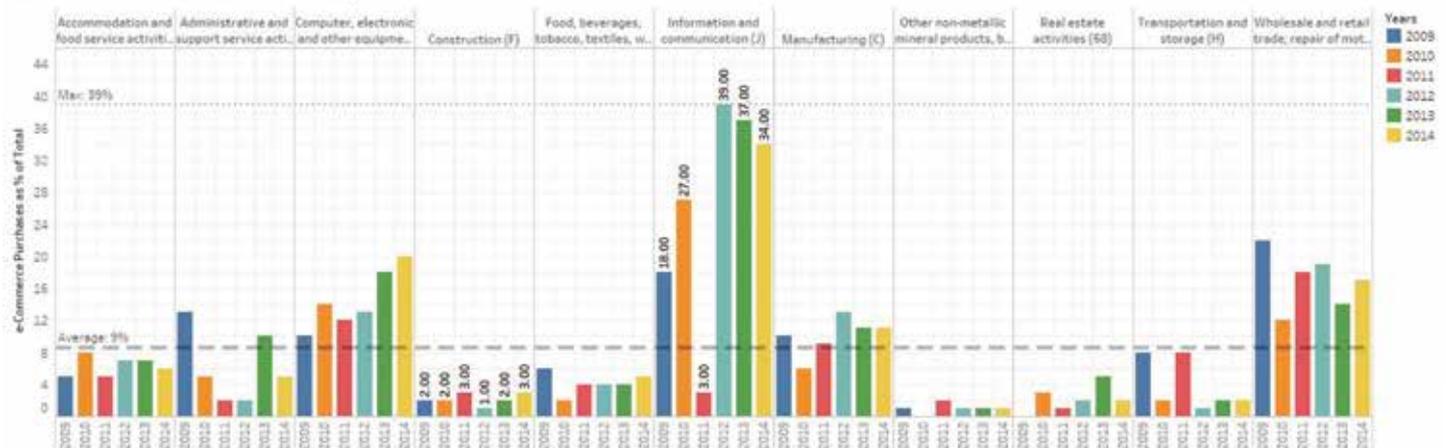
Our mission is to help the construction industry reach the productivity levels of a technology company, and we believe the first step to achieving this is to digitise the material ordering process. Those doing the buying on-site probably use e-Commerce to buy concert tickets or book a flight, and there's no logical reason why the same shouldn't be happening when they're ordering electrical cable or timber from a local builders' merchant.

If you're involved with a contractor or homebuilder, and would like to use e-Commerce to order building materials which integrates with your Accounting or ERP system without any up-front costs, check out our website or arrange a chat with us today. **C**



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HEALTH AND SAFETY IS CRITICAL TO DRIVING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The CIF Health and Safety Summit 2020 was a unique opportunity in this year for health and safety managers to come together virtually to watch presentations and engage with each other. **ROBBIE COUSINS** reports.

The CIF Health and Safety Summit 2020, which took place virtually, featured presentations by Dr David Nabarro, Special Envoy, World Health Organisation (WHO) and Co-Director, Imperial College Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College London; Dr Sharon McGuinness, CEO, Health and Safety Authority (HSA); and Andrew Brownlee, CEO, Solas; plus many others.

The event was moderated by Dr Roisin Murphy, Senior Lecturer, College of Engineering and the Built Environment, TU Dublin.

The theme of this year's summit was 'How to be resilient in a time of crisis and face the challenges of working in a post-pandemic world'.

In his opening address, Frank Kelly, Chairperson, CIF Health, Safety and Welfare sub-Committee and Senior Vice-President, CIF, commented, "We have said many times before that ours is a resilient industry. But nothing has demonstrated this more to me than the cross-sector collaboration and engagement that resulted in the publication of the Standard Operating Procedure. This document played a key role in showing Government that our industry was in a position to demonstrate robust procedures and led to a decision by Government that our industry was to be among the first to be allowed to return following the national lockdown last March. This is a privilege that our industry recognises and does not take lightly. Our sub-Committee continues to meet fortnightly to review advice and best-in-class practices to ensure our members are continually appraised and informed."

SITE INSPECTIONS

In a presentation that addressed 'Improving Health and Safety: Best Practice in The New Landscape', HSA CEO Dr Sharon McGuinness said that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is unlike traditional risks, such as falls from height, as it could not be seen. "Knowledge of the virus was evolving daily. It is also a virus that can



Dermot Carey, Director, Safety and Training, CIF; and Frank Kelly, Chairperson, CIF Health, Safety and Welfare sub-Committee and Senior Vice-President, CIF.

affect people in and out of the workplace."

Speaking about Covid inspections carried out by the HSA, she said, "Of the 4,480 workplace inspections carried out so far this year, 2,066 were in the construction sector, where we have seen relatively high levels of compliance, with 88% of construction sites having Covid measures in place, 80% having a Covid response plan in place, and 76% having a lead worker representative."

KEEP GOING

In the morning keynote address entitled 'Learning to Live with Covid-19', Dr David Nabarro shared his insights on getting the balance right between living with Covid and getting on with our lives.

He said it is essential to keep vigilant and work the precautions until the vaccination programme is rolled out fully.

"You need to keep going. Resurgence and further lockdowns will demoralise people and lead to more bankruptcies particularly in SMEs and family-run businesses. There is no real alternative but to continue to implement the necessary steps to be able to interrupt transmission as soon as it starts."

ONLINE SAFEPASS DELIVERY

In the afternoon keynote address entitled 'The Future of Safety Training', Andrew Brownlee, CEO, Solas, said that it is important to see health and safety as being critical to driving the performance of the construction industry.

"Health and safety is about doing things efficiently, doing things effectively. It's about doing things in the right way. That is a real driver of why health and safety is so important."

He added that with over 112,000 Safepass cards issued in 2019, it is clear that this scheme is contributing to safety in the construction industry.

Addressing the issue of online Safepass delivery, he said that there were several measures put in place this year that mean that the delivery of Solas programmes will be transformed in the future.

"Our intention is to make full use of technology to underpin health and safety in construction. We now have a new digitised card management system, an online payment system, and we have developed digitised assessment processes. The next stage of development will revolutionise how card schemes are delivered in the next couple of years. New developments will include integrated monitoring, online customer support, moving to a fully digitised e-licence system, and the development of online delivery options." **C**

CIF would like to thank the Summit's gold sponsor Topcon Positioning Ireland for its continued support, as well as Firepro; National Construction Training Centre, Mount Lucas; Engage EHS; Xenon Fever Defence; Certification Europe; Waterford and Wexford Education Training Board; and the UK Department for International Trade.

A POSITIVE BUT TENTATIVE OUTLOOK FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN THE SOUTH

The Southern Construct Summit 2020 took place at a time when in addition to Covid-19, there are many issues affecting construction in the southern region that urgently need to be addressed. **ROBBIE COUSINS** reports.

The southern region of the country saw several important projects slowly progress through planning in recent months, but a number of serious issues need to be resolved if any momentum is to be achieved in 2021.

In the area of roads, the Dunkettle Interchange has finally been started, and progress on bringing the €250m M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy project has just cleared its last legal hurdle. However, major private-sector apartment developments in the region are stuck in limbo due to commercial viability issues. The Cork Events Centre is also waiting to be progressed, and the development of flood defences in the city centre are being delayed as a result of judicial reviews.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

On the positive side, many large-scale office projects are underway and being completed in Cork city centre, including Penrose Quay, Counting House, Horgan's Quay and Navigation Square.

The Government has just signed off on €110m in funding for the €400m Waterford North Quays Project, and the Limerick Opera project commenced the demolition phase recently.

All of these issues and many more were covered across a comprehensive programme at the Southern Construct Summit 2020, organised by iQuest. The summit also had addresses from An Taoiseach Micheál Martin and Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath TD, as well as presentations from key projects stakeholders and panel discussions with leading figures in Irish construction.

In his opening address, Sean Carrigy, Chairman, Cork Branch, CIF, said that Covid-19 transmission has been very low on Irish construction sites and that the sector is about to see significant infrastructure project investment on a scale never planned before.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

The Taoiseach said that infrastructure investment is one of the key levers that



L to r: Tom Parlon, Director General, CIF; Pat Lucey, President, CIF; Sean Carrigy, Chairman, Cork Branch, CIF; Conor O'Connell, Director, Southern Region, CIF; with the presentation made to Pat Lucey, President, CIF, to mark the end of his tenure as CIF President and to thank him for his support of the southern region.



L to r: Fearghal Reidy, Director of Strategic & Economic Development, Cork City Council; and Paul Moran, Regional Manager, Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

Government can pull to stimulate the economy.

“Investment in new infrastructure creates jobs and delivers tangible assets that fuel long-term economic growth and so, in prioritising infrastructure investment now, we are building the backbone for our future economy.

“In that context, the announcement of the go-ahead for the Dunkettle Interchange project is most welcome, as is capital and current funding for Cork Airport.”

He said that the development of the southern region and its urban centres is

critical for the long-term prosperity of the economy and society.

“The National Development Plan provides the investment needed to underpin this vision; including for major transport and health projects like the M20 Cork to Limerick and the new acute care ward at Waterford Hospital.

“In addition, projects delivered through the €3bn Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds will help to strengthen economies and communities across the region.”



L to r: Paul Sheridan, Director, Main Contracting and Civil Engineering, CIF; Pat Lucey, President, CIF; Conor O'Connell, Director, Southern Region, CIF; and Tom Parlon, Director General, CIF.

SUCCESSFUL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

In a panel discussion entitled 'Getting Back on Track', Pat Lucey, President, CIF, said that it is a well-known feature of major infrastructure projects worldwide that the problems that can develop during the construction stage have all been built in long before the contractor enters a site.

"The lessons that we need to learn from international best practice is that the work that goes into the early stage of major projects has got to be of a high standard. Once this is done, the targets and the numbers being spoken about will be far more accurate than the numbers being delivered that has been happening heretofore."

He added, "There are hundreds of successful projects across the country that are delivering value for the taxpayer, delivering infrastructure that allows housing, and providing employment and good working conditions."

CORK CITY DOCKLANDS

Minister McGrath said that investment in the economy has to be well planned and executed and must form part of

a coordinated overall plan for the development of the country.

"In our own southern region, the redevelopment of the Cork City Docklands is a project of international significance, which is creating a magnet for investment into Cork city, county and beyond. This will further establish Cork's position as a gateway for investment.

"The public consultation on the Cork-Limerick motorway (M20) further underlines this Government's commitment to balanced regional development. We have seen welcome progress on the upgrade of the Dunkettle Interchange, and recently, I was pleased to announce, along with Minister Eamon Ryan, further investment in our airports in Cork, Shannon and Kerry, to boost the connectivity of the southern region. As well as providing direct employment, these measures and others will boost the productive capacity of Cork and the entire southern region."

M28 AND DUNKETTLE INTERCHANGE

In his presentation on current and planned activity for the southern region, Conor O'Connell, Director, Southern Region,

CIF, said that annually in Munster there is about €500m of general contracting activity. This excludes civils and residential work. He said that in the area of infrastructure, the M28 motorway and Dunkettle Interchange would be essential works, with many follow-on projects linked to them.

"Both of these projects will facilitate the relocation of the Port of Cork to Ringaskiddy, and large-scale residential development in Ringaskiddy, Glanmire and Cork city. They will also open up lands in Ringaskiddy for further development in the life-sciences sector.

"We hope that the facilitating works for the M28 will commence in 2021, but remain concerned about further challenges to it. The M28 illustrates the problems that exist in our legal system and resulting delays."

APARTMENT VIABILITY

He said that the viability of apartment development in all sectors in the southern region needs to be urgently addressed.

"Suburban two-, three- and four-bedroom housing in Cork Limerick, Waterford and major towns are the only viable housing types that can be built at the moment. We need to address the viability of apartment development for all sectors. There are many viable private-sector apartment developments across the region that are ready to go, but they are not viable due to the conditions that must be met. Unfortunately, planning policy in Ireland is diverging from the economic realities that our members are facing when it comes to residential delivery."

The Southern Construct Summit 2020 was hosted by broadcaster Jonathan Healy. The CIF is grateful for the support of gold sponsors Topcon, and silver sponsors Diatec, KPMG and Matheson. **C**



L to r: Dave Coakley, Director, Coakley O'Neill Town Planning; and Michael Lynch, Director of Planning, Cork County Council.

INNOVATION AND BEST VALUE - RIDGEWAY, THE “GO TO” DESTINATION FOR WORK AT HEIGHT

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INNOVATION AND BEST VALUE IN CONSTRUCTION SINCE 1969

APPLYING DELAY ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES TO IDENTIFY WHY PROJECTS ARE DELAYED

TOM FRANCIS, Director, Decipher Consulting, writes about how delays to construction projects might best be assessed, demonstrated and managed.

The past year has thrown some significant challenges at the construction industry. Brexit is upon us, and ongoing issues caused by lockdowns resulting from the Covid-19 crisis have led to supply-chain and resource issues throughout Europe.

If a delay should arise on your project, you will usually need to prove why it occurred and demonstrate the resulting effect. In these instances, a forensic delay analysis is often used to get to the heart of the issue. Delay analysis sometimes is seen as a 'dark art'; something carried out using planning software that is a mystery to the majority of us. But it needn't be so. Whatever method is being used to analyse delay, a few things are essential for a successful delay claim.

ENTITLEMENT – HAS A DELAY OCCURRED THAT IS THE OTHER PARTY'S RISK?

For this first item, you may need a solicitor. Contracts can be complex and interlinked documents. Entitlement to compensation will very much depend upon the nature, content, and interpretation of the contract and supporting documents.

Standard form contracts may allow for an 'Extension of Time' and compensation in the form of damages (for certain delay events, but not all). Some will allow for neither, or be modified as to make things ambiguous. A good solicitor will work with you and your team to examine what the contract actually means. They will also be able to identify alternative interpretations.

DEMONSTRATION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

Demonstration of cause and effect is something which many people find challenging. Often people look at a project and say, "The project should have finished on x date, but it finished on y date, so the delay is y-x".

However, you must show the precise cause and effect. As everyone reading this will appreciate, construction projects are complex. Even the simplest project will encounter delays. Causes include late delivery of materials (particularly relevant at the moment), delayed issue of drawings, variations to design, etc. Any number or combination of these factors may have an impact on progress.

The following three questions may help with identifying cause and effect:

- Is there an effective cause?
- Is the suggested cause based on fact?
- Has common sense been applied?

A good delay analyst will be able to separate different causes and identify their effect upon progress or completion. The analyst ought to trace a clear evidential link from cause to effect. They should separate the activities, which had a critical impact on the programme. The demonstration of a factual cause is important; it must be possible to substantiate any claims with facts.

The usual approach is to consider cause first and then effect. However, many of the methods now advocated by the Society of Construction Law (SCL) Protocol look at analysis the other way around. Calculating the effect of delay first, and only then considering the cause is often the preferred approach for 'retrospective', after the event analysis.

RECORDS

Records are one of the most neglected and difficult areas faced by



Tom Francis, Director, Decipher Consulting.

delay analysts. We frequently come across situations where a strong claim and good analysis is made impossible by a lack of records. The importance of keeping good, accurate, clear and structured records cannot be overstated, particularly for the production of a useful delay analysis.

The required demonstration of cause and effect cannot be achieved without good, structured records. It seems that human nature is to assume that everything is going to be fine. Constraints on budget, time, etc, all conspire to lead to the poor management of construction records.

The late Max Abrahamson of Dublin law firm, McCann Fitzgerald noted on the importance of records, "A party to a dispute, particularly if there is arbitration, will learn three lessons (often too late): the importance of records, the importance of records and the importance of records."

There are several guides to what records should be kept and how. The SCL Protocol gives some guidance and examples, as does the CIOB guide to "Time Management in Complex Projects".

Many factors go into making a good delay analysis, but the above three factors can help to ensure a greater chance of success. **C**

To find out more about delay analysis and how Decipher can assist you, call Paul, Tom or Bill on +44 (0)1625 626200, email paul.gibbons@decipher-group.com or visit www.decipher-group.com

RAPID, AFFORDABLE AND CONVENIENT ON-SITE TESTING FOR COVID-19

A new cost-effective saliva-based PCR test enables contractors to serial test for coronavirus infection.

HealthWatch a company that has been working with the Construction Workers Health Trust since 2013 providing on-site health screening, has developed a fast-turnaround saliva-based serial Covid-19 test that can detect the presence of RNA from SARS Cov2, the virus that causes Covid 19. It also provides a quantitative measure of the amount of viral RNA. The ease of saliva sampling coupled with the fast turnaround (under 24 hours) and its affordability makes it an ideal test for screening large numbers of individuals on a frequent (eg weekly) basis.

Serial PCR testing is recommended for essential construction sites, off-site facilities, or projects, where the cost of a shutdown due to a Covid-19 outbreak would be prohibitive. The test does not need to be administered by a medical professional, and simply requires a designated person to oversee collecting of saliva samples and verify the chain of custody. The cost of the test is a fraction of the cost of other tests being offered on the market. PCR testing is also more sensitive and specific at detecting active infection in asymptomatic individuals than other methods, such as temperature monitoring, lamp testing, rapid antigen testing or anti-body testing.

In a CIF-hosted webinar, Professor Paul Moynagh, Professor of Immunology, Maynooth University, explained that PCR detects the RNA at the core of the virus. "This is achieved by amplifying the RNA in a sample, so the virus is more easily detected. If there are low levels of infection,

say at the start or end of infection when a person may be asymptomatic, the test will amplify the RNA and easily detect infection."

If an infected person arrives at a site before symptoms develop, PCR testing can detect the infection, and the person can isolate before symptoms develop. Importantly, this greatly increases the probability of preventing the seeding of infection on the site.

The serial test is being piloted on a CIF member site during December. The high level of inquiries received following the CIF webinar indicates that a large number of contractors are increasing their defences against the virus, so they can protect their workers and their families, as well as take extra measures to protect against an onsite outbreak.

WHAT IS SERIAL SCREENING?

Serial screening has been identified as one of the major defences to control and prevent the transmission of SARS-CoV-2. This is used widely in some high-risk settings, essential services and elite/professional sporting organisations. Regular screening greatly reduces the risk of seeding infection in group settings and is a critically important measure in keeping workplaces open and operational. The major challenges of frequent nasopharyngeal screening include turnaround times, costs and logistics, as well as the discomfort associated with taking the swabs. However, the HealthWatch saliva test does not have these challenges.



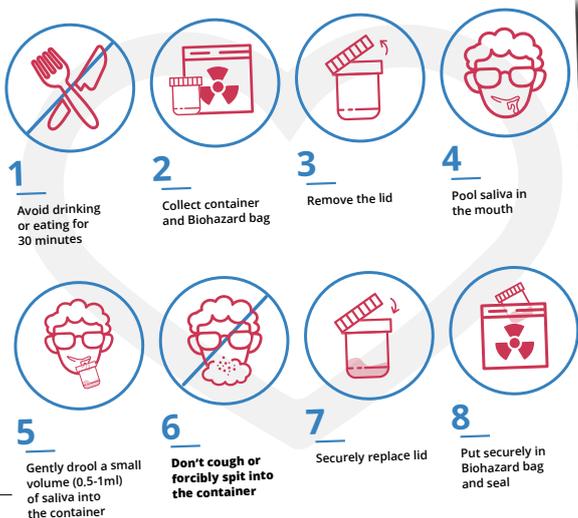
Paul Moynagh, Professor of Immunology, Maynooth University.

inefficient swabbing techniques. Until now there has been no validated RT-qPCR for saliva testing in Ireland. Saliva allows for easy, non-invasive sample collection and, depending on when samples are received, can yield same day or next day results. No special swabs or qualified nursing staff are required to collect the sample.

Healthwatch's saliva RT-qPCR test, carried out regularly, is ideally suited to screen for positive cases before infected individuals can transmit the infection to others. Serial screening works best when conducted frequently. "A negative result received a week ago gives you no information as to your infectiousness today," says Jack Nolan, Managing Director, HealthWatch. "We recommend that serial screening is performed at a frequency of at least once per week to provide effective support for businesses to remain open and operational. "While the incubation period from initial infection to symptom presentation is typically around six days, many individuals can begin to transmit the virus for several days before becoming symptomatic while others may be infectious and remain asymptomatic."

HealthWatch can provide its PCR serial testing on a nationwide basis and can scale-up as demand grows. **C**

The CIF webinar 'Rapid, Affordable and Convenient Saliva Based RT qPCR Testing for COVID 19 13 11 2020' can be viewed on the CIF Academy website www.ciftraining.ie. For more details, contact Lucinda Horwell, Commercial Director. HealthWatch by email at lucinda.horwell@healthwatch.ie



HEALTHWATCH SCREENING SERVICE

The HealthWatch Gold-Standard RT-qPCR for SARS-CoV-2 serial test service is designed to provide quality, affordable, and local screening. The test has been clinically validated.

For many, the nasopharyngeal swab collection of a sample is an intrusive, unpleasant experience, which can be difficult to tolerate. It requires, at the very least, a specialised nurse proficient in the procedure. In the past few months, there have been growing reports of false negatives due to

PULLING TOGETHER FOR SAFETY

WAYNE METCALFE, Director, Health, Safety, Sustainability & Quality, John Sisk & Son Ltd, writes about how Sisk teams and suppliers across Europe pulled together for safety during Construction Safety Week 2020.

Construction Safety Week 2020 was an excellent opportunity to reflect upon aspects of health and safety, and overall wellbeing, as well as promoting its importance throughout our industry.

At John Sisk & Son, we are guided by our values of 'Care', 'Integrity' and 'Excellence'. We take care of ourselves, the people we work with, and the environments and the communities in which we work. As a main sponsor of Construction Safety Week 2020, we set our health and safety teams the challenge of coming up with safety demonstrations that would engage our site teams, and the response was fantastic.

Over 60 Sisk projects across all sectors in Ireland and Europe participated, including Prague, Czech Republic; Haarlem, the Netherlands; and sites in Malmo and Lulea in Sweden.

DAY ONE: MENTAL HEALTH, WELFARE AND WELLBEING IN CONSTRUCTION

On day one of Construction Safety Week, at Project Kells in Dublin city centre, the Sisk team collaborated with mental health charity Aware. Drew Flood from Aware spoke to the site team and our supply chain partners about men needing to talk about mental health and the issues they are facing. He also spoke about the services offered by Aware and urged anybody in difficulty to reach out.

Sticking with mental health, the Sisk team and our supply chain partners in Malmo, Sweden, hosted talks and exhibitions about mental health and wellbeing. A large portion of the team on site are away from home with limited options to travel home due to Covid-19. This was a perfect opportunity for the team to check-in on one another.

These were hard-hitting talks about mental health. This has now become a key focus of our business. We have demonstrated our commitment to mental health, having rolled out our partnership with mental health and wellbeing programme I Am Here to train 110 staff to have difficult conversations and recognise the signs if somebody is feeling down or depressed. The I Am Here programme



Wayne Metcalfe, Director, Health, Safety, Sustainability & Quality, John Sisk & Son Ltd.



Drew Flood from Aware speaking to the site team about mental health at Sisk's Project Kells site in Dublin city centre.

builds skills in teams to connect people with help and support.

DAY TWO: PLANT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The theme of day two of Construction Safety Week 2020 was 'Plant and Pedestrian Safety', which was marked at Xeljanz Pfizer

and our Cherrywood projects with safety demonstrations. These focused on key considerations, that included:

- The dangers of mixing people and plant;
- Identifying the blind spots with a telehandler;
- A demonstration of what a driver can and can't see while in the cab, especially



Tower crane owner Mantis carried out a safety demonstration on emergency preparedness with a tower crane at Sisk's Cork Street site in Dublin city centre.

- in poor weather conditions;
- The positioning of spotters/PVMs and what are their roles; and,
- The controls/safety devices to be used when operating a telehandler.

DAY THREE: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN CONSTRUCTION

Our BioCork 2 project marked day three – 'Occupational Health in Construction' – by hosting several safety talks on the following topics:

- Respirable crystalline silica dust,
- Driver fatigue; and,
- Occupational cancer (sun safety).

Talks were given by the Sisk team and some of our supply chain partners.

DAY FOUR: WORKING SAFELY AT HEIGHT

As part of day four, 'Working Safely at Height', the Sisk team and our supply chain gave a safety demonstration at our 70 St Stephen's Green site in Dublin city centre. There was also a toolbox talk given on the dangers and work equipment standards for mobile access tower cranes.

DAY FIVE: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Our Sisk Living project at Cork Street, Dublin, saved the most eye-catching safety demonstration until day five of the campaign. In partnership with our tower crane owner, Mantis, our team carried out a safety demonstration from a tower crane for emergency preparedness. There were also safety talks on different harness and lanyard types, inspection of harnesses and what to do in the event of a suspension.



Sisk's BioCork 2 project site marked day three by hosting several talks on Occupational Health in Construction. L to r: Finbarr Sedas, Radley Engineering; Tony Ruxton, John Sisk and Son; Paul Mc Garry, Ardmac; and Brendan O'Connell, STS.



This data centre project in Sweden was one of 60 Sisk sites that hosted Construction Safety Week 2020 events.

PULLING TOGETHER FOR SAFETY

As Director of Health, Safety, Sustainability & Quality with Sisk, I would like to express my gratitude to all of our health and safety teams and staff across Ireland and Europe. Our Construction Safety Week 2020 events wouldn't have been possible without the support and dedication of our supply chain

partners and clients. Against the backdrop of Covid-19, all of our teams pulled together to deliver some outstanding events and raise awareness of health and safety in our sector.

Thank you to all the Sisk team and our supply chain partners for participating in Construction Safety Week 2020. Please stay safe. **C**

USING 3D SITE MODELS TO IMPROVE ON-SITE SAFETY

Having recently won the 'Health & Safety Excellence in Construction Award' at the inaugural Health & Safety Excellence Awards for a BIM safety initiative, **RAY COOTE**, BIM Manager, Collen Construction, writes about how the programme works on site.

At Collen Construction, the safety and wellbeing of everyone is paramount. We strive to attain and maintain health and safety excellence. We have ISO 45001-2018 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems certification, which gives a clear signal to all of our projects' stakeholders that employees' health and safety is a priority for Collen. During the past three years, BIM has also grown as an essential core feature of the business, and the integration of health and safety and BIM is important.

HEALTH AND SAFETY BIM MODULE

The hypothesis of our Health and Safety BIM Module (HSBIMM) is that BIM can increase the awareness of construction workers to site risks and educate them on the relevant health and safety issues and how to take preventative action.

The HSBIMM is an immersive 3D-model experience, with embedded and linked regulatory information, codes of practice and general HSA guidance. Individuals can engage in this virtual environment, which contains simulated hazards, alongside guidance on the control or mitigation of these hazards.

As modelling software used in design development and delivery increases, visual representations enhance our ability to anticipate hazards and risks in a project. A variety of applications can be used by designers and construction experts, which enable locations to be accurately visualised and sequenced, and activities to be realistically demonstrated and construction programmes to be 4D simulated. Use of these applications can aid in displaying and addressing health and safety concerns.

CHALLENGE TO BE SOLVED

The overall aim of the initiative was to create a platform for educating personnel within Collen on construction site risks, hazards identification and site awareness. The objectives of this initiative were threefold:

1. To analyse current health and safety standards, codes of practice and legislation along with safety management practice, and identify the critical issues on construction sites. Map the standards to appropriate BIM activities and tools suitable to address the perceived risks and problems.
2. To develop a prototype interactive enhanced 3D health and safety site scenario – the HSBIMM – incorporating Irish safety standard legislation, codes of practice, and guidance documentation dynamically linked within the model.
3. To evaluate the perceived benefits or otherwise of the HSBIMM, with emphasis on model content, knowledge gains from model interaction, and potential for integration into company processes and procedures.

During the pre-construction period, 3D and 4D technology can improve safety performance through visual, interactive, and cooperative behaviours, as well as facilitating risk and hazard identification and management. Visual and safety materials positively impact safety communications and site-specific hazard awareness and should be included in training programmes.



A representative image from the Collen Health and Safety BIM Module showing pop-up notices for excavation works.

COMMITMENT

This initiative seeks to improve health and safety on construction sites by giving construction personnel the opportunity to experience the project from a first-person point of view at numerous upcoming intervals throughout the build. Increased early identification of hazardous locations and tasks that they may need to deal with is the goal, thus allowing them enough time to come up with appropriate solutions to rectify the potential issues. All the while, the module ties in with all applicable regulations and codes of practice to ensure full legislative compliance.

This initiative was driven from the top down in Collen Construction, with the benefits of the initiative being praised by the company Managing Director, Tommy Drumm, Health and Safety Manager, Joe O'Dwyer, and Construction Director, David Lee.

The HSBIMM was trialled on one of our sites in 2020, with very positive feedback.

OUTCOMES AND FUTURE USES

The positive feedback from the participant response statements indicates that construction-facing staff strongly support the implementation of the HSBIMM. The core software used, Navisworks Freedom, is free, so there is no heavy initial investment required to be able to experience the benefits of this module. Any person can use the software with little or no understanding of Navisworks needed, and only basic training required. The HSBIMM is aimed at increasing knowledge of health and safety standards on site. It references many aspects of Irish health and safety legislation means that it can be used in a wide variety of construction projects. The module can be customised to suit any construction company's safety management system and can easily be updated to include information on an individual company's procedures/permits/forms, etc. **C**

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO GO HOME EVERY DAY UNHARMED

BRIAN SHEEHAN, Head of Asset Delivery, Irish Water, writes about construction safety in the water delivery sector, Irish Water's response to Covid-19, and how safety continues to be central to everything the company does.

Irish Water continues to be a proud sponsor of Construction Safety Week, as safety is a crucial priority for Irish Water and the water industry. Irish Water was delighted to continue our partnership with CIF for Construction Safety Week 2020.

Making sure our people, our contractors and our partners are safe, as well as ensuring our services and works do not cause harm, are absolute priorities for us. This is now even more to the forefront, given the impacts of Covid-19. The industry has worked hard to put extensive safety measures in place, and we continue working closely with it to make sure these measures are effective in limiting the spread of Covid-19 while keeping our construction sites open.

POPULAR WORKSHOPS AND WEBINARS AT CONSTRUCTION SAFETY WEEK

A key focus for Irish Water this year was engaging with our partners virtually by hosting webinars and industry safety days. Taking part in the CIF live webinar on 'Managing Safety in Construction through the Covid-19 Pandemic' was a highlight for me, in that it enabled us to have open discussions across the industry on this critical topic.

Irish Water also held several industry safety days, hosting workshops with our delivery partners and focusing on the need for good near-miss reporting, high potential incidents and the benefits of getting it right the first time. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my colleagues in Irish Water and delivery partners for sharing industry learnings and bringing safety to life.

SAFETY CONVERSATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE THAT NOBODY GETS HURT

At Irish Water, the focus is on sharing key safety messages to ensure that nobody gets hurt on our sites. One of our core beliefs is that no activity is so important or urgent that it cannot be done safely. We all have a role to play in achieving our safety vision.

Irish Water, as a single public utility, can



Brian Sheehan, Head of Asset Delivery, Irish Water.

“ ONE OF OUR CORE BELIEFS IS THAT NO ACTIVITY IS SO IMPORTANT OR URGENT THAT IT CANNOT BE DONE SAFELY. WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN ACHIEVING OUR SAFETY VISION. ”

bring benefits across the sector around health and safety.

Delivering hundreds of essential water

and wastewater projects throughout the country gives a strategic overview of construction across the water sector for the first time in Ireland. We continuously analyse trends we see on our projects and investigate the root causes associated with accidents, incidents and near misses. Sharing this information across the water industry through our collaborative forums is extremely beneficial and fundamental to our belief that everyone has the right to go home every day unharmed.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Covid-19 has not only impacted on the safety and wellbeing of those working our construction sites, but also on the safety and wellbeing of those working from home.

We have made a huge shift in our workforce by moving away from our offices and into our homes. Our safety initiative 'Work Safe, Home Safe' takes on a new meaning now, with so many of our staff and partners working in a new way from home. We have developed new safety programmes on emergency preparedness in the home. We support our staff living with young children as well as elderly family members, in addition to providing specific safety advice in areas such as fire risks with phone chargers and extension leads.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The mental health and wellbeing of all of our staff and everyone engaged in work on Irish Water sites are of major importance.

This year a key theme of Construction Safety Week focused on mental health, welfare and wellbeing. Never has this been more important, as we face into the significant uncertainty that this pandemic has brought. We all have a responsibility to look after one another and ourselves, and we must not ever forget this.

IRISH WATER

As Ireland's national water utility, Irish Water is responsible for providing water and wastewater services throughout Ireland. From coast to coast, our job is to ensure that we deliver the highest quality drinking water to your taps every day, and also to ensure that wastewater is treated correctly and safely returned to the environment. **C**

COVID-19 WILL HAVE A LASTING BENEFIT ON HOW WE COMMUNICATE ON SITE

MIKE MCLOUGHLIN, Health & Safety Manager, John Paul Construction, writes about the innovative ways in which the contractor used technology and social media to convey its safety messages during Construction Safety Week 2020.

In many ways, our world has been turned upside down this year by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite all its restrictions, it has also forced us to look at things differently. It has forced us to plan, coordinate and communicate to a higher standard and in different ways. We believe this will have long-lasting benefits for health and safety in construction.

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY WEEK 2020

Construction Safety Week 2020 was a great example of where we saw various means of communication bringing benefit. It is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness for all involved in the construction industry and improve buy-in that can be sustained on an on-going basis. Since its inception in 2016, we have generally delivered our messages through large site talks with guest speakers, toolbox talks and demonstrations. However, this year we had to be more inventive. Initially, we were concerned that we would not be able to deliver our message, but as it turned out, we feel we were more effective.

SAFETY LEADERSHIP

We started Construction Safety Week with a Safety Leadership session delivered by legendary Kilkenny hurling manager Brian Cody. Over Microsoft Teams, Brian delivered a powerful session, including a Q&A, to almost 300 staff. He tapped into the parallels between his outstanding sporting achievements and our relentless pursuit of safety excellence. In an inspiring talk, he spoke about commitment, standards, expectations, feedback, support and engagement.

SAFETY VIDEOS

In advance of the week, we produced three short videos to cover important safety topics – plant/person interfaces, work at height, and lifting operations (all available on our LinkedIn page). We were concerned that we would not be able to communicate to everyone, so we distributed these through WhatsApp groups across our projects, in-person to small groups, and on our site display screens.

All in-person talks during the week were undertaken with small groups, which ended up being far more effective and engaging,

particularly around the subjects of mental health, wellbeing and occupational health. People were more forthcoming with real and meaningful feedback.

WORKSAFE – HOMESAFE

Each year, we run a Worksafe – Homesafe competition, where workers are asked to take photos at home to reinforce what safety is all about at the end of that day. This year we put a Covid-19 twist on the competition 'Stand Up to Covid'. Everyone was asked to take a photo at home with their loved ones to demonstrate commitment to the Covid-19 control measures. The competition was a huge success, with great buy-in from all.

Overall, the combination of virtual interaction, video clips, personal engagement with small groups, and an outstanding level of ingenuity from our site teams resulted in a very successful week that we can build on rather than reverting to how it was before. **C**



Mike McLoughlin, Health & Safety Manager, John Paul Construction.

John Paul Construction recently won the Health, Safety and Wellbeing award at the Irish Construction Excellence Awards for its safety leadership initiative.



Entries for the John Paul Construction Stand up to Covid competition.



Kilkenny hurling manager Brian Cody, with John Paul Construction managing director Liam Kenny, delivered a talk to almost 300 John Paul Construction staff.



CONSTRUCTION SAFETY WEEK WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO HIGHLIGHT SECTOR'S HIGH SAFETY STANDARDS

GERRY KEANE, HSE Manager, Walls Construction, writes about how the company approached Construction Safety Week 2020 and why Walls is a gold sponsor of the annual programme.

Walls Construction was delighted to be a gold sponsor of Construction Safety Week 2020, which took place from 19th to 23rd October. Walls had a full programme of health and safety-related events across our projects during Construction Safety Week 2020, recognising that it is an excellent medium for increasing the focus on health and safety for management, site personnel, subcontractor partners and others.

The planned events covered the topics selected for focus throughout the industry, including mental health and wellbeing, plant and pedestrian safety, occupational health, working safely at heights and emergency preparedness.

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY WEEK 2020

This year's Construction Safety Week took place in an environment where, first and foremost, our industry was in the privileged position of being open during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This increased our obligation, in collaboration with subcontractor partners, other suppliers, and all stakeholders, to give prior, careful consideration as to how best to apply the central themes of the week while ensuring Government guidelines, the 'Construction Sector C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedure' and our own Covid-19 management plan were followed.

The Walls Construction Safety Week Committee did a fabulous job, ably supported by various site teams and others, planning and delivering a timetable of events that supported the five key themes for the week. Construction Safety Week champions were appointed on each site, to help with planning events and communicating information, such as video links and competitions to highlight safe work practices. Each evening posters and other material were circulated, including material provided by the CIE, based on the theme for the following day, all within the parameters of Covid-19 guidelines, such as social distancing and face coverings.

Due largely to Covid-19, Construction Safety Week 2020 was site-led. Site teams provided updates and posted images highlighting site-based events, while many subcontractors and suppliers were actively involved, notably running specifically designed toolbox



talks. As a result of Covid-19 restrictions, technologies, such as WhatsApp, were widely used to ensure that health and safety promotion material got to the target location – workers on the ground.

HEALTH SCREENING

The Construction Workers Health Trust, an important and valued service, provided health screening on a large site. At the same time, throughout the week, a selection of webinars on themes such as employee wellbeing, proved very popular. Webinars are a great tool in this pandemic, being accessible to the large numbers of management and staff working from home. The use of webinars and other initiatives that support work-life balance is a crucial learning experience from this pandemic, and it can be said that the way we manage our business and ourselves in the future is likely to be changed significantly.

WALLS GREAT CATCH SYSTEM

Another popular initiative during Construction Safety Week was prize-awarding for highlighting health and safety suggestions through our 'Great Catch' system. Also, on-the-spot prizes were awarded to recognise other safety initiatives, such as exemplary housekeeping standards and safe plan of actions (SPAs), the management of exclusion zones and excellent PPE compliance standards.

Walls Construction has been a primary supporter of Construction Safety Week since its inception in 2016, and engagement with health and safety is now more important than ever. Construction Safety Week 2020 enabled the industry to demonstrate that the standards achieved during Covid-19 are those we intend to maintain to ensure the health and safety for all. **C**

IMPLEMENTING A ZERO HARM STRATEGY

DEREK MURPHY, Head of Environmental, Health and Safety, Designer Group, writes that one thing that 2020 has shown us all is that the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff and subcontractors must be at the core of every company's operations.

Our industry can learn just one thing in the throes of a pandemic; it is that health, safety and wellbeing will forever be the most critical topic. Never before has everything we know about how to stay safe and healthy been needed so much and by so many. That is why it was so good to see that Construction Safety Week (CSW) proved to be a storming success yet again.

As we are gold sponsors, CSW is a mainstay on the Designer Group calendar. We collaborated closely with the CIF and fellow members to provide professional support and to ensure health, safety and wellbeing topics were both meaningful and impactful.

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY WEEK 2020

Over CSW 2020, we gave practical demonstrations and shared invaluable knowledge, providing techniques that can be used immediately on site. Designer Group is fully committed to a 'Zero Harm' strategy across the business. To accomplish this, we must remain at the frontline of our industry's health and safety obligations.

Government restrictions due to Covid-19 have presented us with many challenges this year. But, our industry loves a challenge, and it was fantastic to witness fellow members' ideas and their related activities to support CSW and its daily themes.

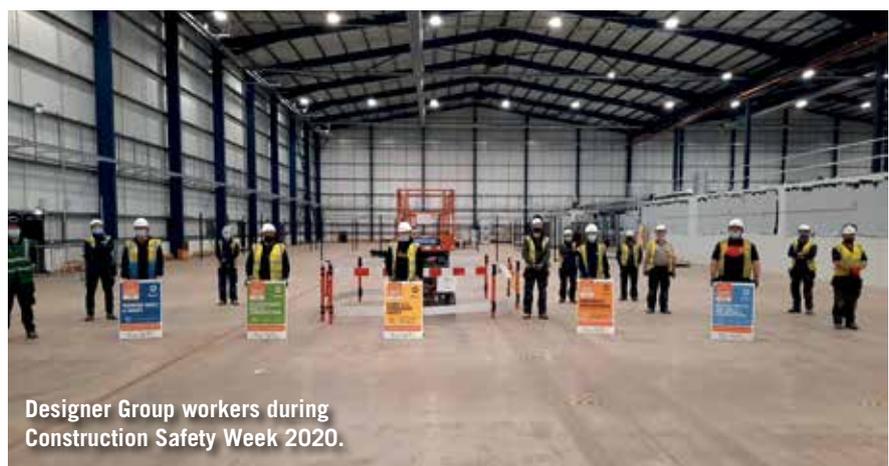
The construction industry sent a clear message that by working together, regardless of being competitors in the marketplace, our people are the most important part of everything we do, and their occupational health, safety and wellbeing are essential. There is a genuine atmosphere of pulling together to focus on the things that matter most – and 2020 has helped us to place these subjects front and centre for now and for the future.

Pandemics aside, as industry leaders, we remain committed to supporting the key CSW themes and displayed this by forming a specific Designer Group CSW committee in August. This group was tasked with devising initiatives to support daily themes. Some of the activities we undertook during CSW 2020 were:

- Launched a company wellness and wellbeing survey
- Held a MEWP Management and Rescue Workshop
- Hosted safety competitions for both our employees and their families



Michael Stone, Group CEO, Designer Group, awards Róisín McManus and Shauna McDonnell of the HR Team prizes during Construction Safety Week 2020.



Designer Group workers during Construction Safety Week 2020.

- Held a Hilti Dust Seminar for managers
- Offered free health screenings by the Construction Workers Health Trust
- Tested our emergency preparedness procedures
- Offered free vehicle health checks to staff.

Designer Group concluded CSW by showing clear leadership commitment, with members of the senior leadership team attending sites and offices to personally reward those employees who were recognised for their outstanding occupational health and safety standards.

DESIGNER GROUP'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

Construction work is considered essential, and therefore we remain open for business and operational. Now, more than ever, the industry will be under the spotlight to

ensure we maintain the highest standards and effective standard operating procedures to reduce the possibility of infection in the workplace.

There have been monumental efforts and investments made to implement a range of risk-reduction measures and new standard operating procedures. We are confident that we have significantly reduced the likelihood of a spread of infection in our workplaces.

A lot of the risk-reduction methods were made possible through the work of the CIF's Covid-19 Working Group – created by the CIF Safety, Health & Welfare sub-Committee to develop the CIF Pandemic SOP and Online Site Induction, of which Designer Group were, and remain an instrumental part.

This is not a time for complacency. There is no room for error. There must be total compliance. We will work through this, and we will see you all on the other side. **C**

UNDERSTANDING THE ‘STOP’ METHOD FOR REDUCING DUST EXPOSURE

DENNIS MARKEY, Marketing Director, Hilti Ireland, writes that Hilti experts were on site all week for Construction Safety Week 2020 demonstrating the ‘STOP’ method to reduce on-site dust by up to 99%.

Dust occurs at nearly every point in the construction process and has hazardous consequences for the health and safety of on-site workers and the surrounding environment.

WHAT IS DUST?

Dust comprises tiny solid particles that are highly dispersed and easily circulated in the air, meaning exposure to dust can affect not just the worker generating the dust but other people in the vicinity.

Dust particles can be microscopic. When smaller than 10 microns, the dust is classified as fine dust or particulate matter (PM). Dust bigger than 10 microns is classified as coarse dust. The average human hair is about 60 microns thick.

There is a variety of dust types that occur on a job site. Inhalable dust, such as wood dust, can be trapped in the mouth and nose, and it is less than 100 microns in size, affecting productivity and causing significant discomfort for workers. The most harmful dust is respirable dust or silica dust, which is less than 10 microns in size and penetrates deep into the lungs. This is generated through abrasive treatment, such as drilling, chiselling, sawing, or grinding of silica-containing materials like concrete, mortar, and sandstone.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF INHALING SILICA DUST

Over-exposure to fine dust is extremely dangerous. Regularly breathing it in can lead to a build-up in the lungs. Once the dust particles have reached parts of the respiratory system, they interfere with oxygen and cause long-term damage. This can lead to serious health problems, including lung cancer, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and silicosis.

EFFECTIVE DUST CONTROL SOLUTIONS

Hilti has a dust research centre in Germany, which plays a vital role in ensuring that Hilti power tools are designed and developed to control dust. Hilti’s dust experts are part of a community actively developing relevant standards like EN 50632.

HSE scientist, John Saunders, who reviewed the work of the Hilti dust research centre, commented about the Hilti approach to tackling dust, “It’s clear that the design of extraction has not been added to the tool as an afterthought; rather, it has been embedded into the tool design at an early stage.”

Hilti has developed several dust control solutions for the majority of customers’ application needs.

STOP PRINCIPLE AS A GUIDE TO CONTROL DUST

STOP (substitution, technical, organisational, protection) defines the sequence of controlling risk as follows:

- Substitution is the elimination of a risk by using safer alternatives. By doing so, the root cause of hazards can be avoided (eg, for some applications, we recommend diamond drilling or direct fastening where possible to minimise dust and Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome [HAVS] exposure.)



Hilti Ireland’s Peter Roberts on site in Cork with PJ Hegarty & Sons workers.



Hilti Ireland’s Richelle Hennessy gives a toolbox talk on a JJ Rhatigan and Company site.

- Technical measures are machinery, tools or technologies to reduce dust in the air, to minimise the dangerous effects of dust for people (eg, the Hilti Dust Removal System [DRS] and Active Vibration reduction [AVR] are practical harmonised systems designed to reduce risk). Hilti has also introduced NFC tags in our tools, which talk to the Hilti Connect app, allowing operatives to access safety information and training videos, as well as safe exposure information at the click of a button from wherever they’re working.
- Organisational measures are made possible by different working methods and improved work organisation (eg, Hilti ON!Track software allows users to manage employee certifications and offers quick and easily accessible health and safety information, such as exposure action values [EAVs] for employees on the job).
- Personal protective measures are needed where risks remain. The user is exposed to this risk. Without these protective measures, there can be health hazards. So, personal protective equipment (PPE) is required to cover the remaining risks. The technical measures used to reduce dust in no means make PPE optional. This is something we take seriously for our employees as well as our customers. **C**

To learn more about how Hilti Ireland can help your business or organise a demonstration by visiting www.hilti.ie

COMMERCIAL PARTNERS

CIF Commercial Partners are suppliers of equipment/services for your construction business



SAFETYSIGNS.IE

PRODUCTS: PPE safety signs, construction site safety signs, site notice boards
CONTACT: Sales team,
 Tel: 066 717 4077,
 Email: info@safetysigns.ie



CLEANTECH MEDICARE

PRODUCTS: Suppliers of high quality CE-certified Covid-19 PPE & thermal scanners
CONTACT: Barry O'Brien,
 Tel: 01 436 2910,
 Email: info@cleantechmedicare.com



MURPHY SURVEYS

SERVICES: BIM, laser scanning, verification, setting out and more
CONTACT: Michael Durnin,
 Tel: 045 484040,
 Email: mdurnin@murphysurveys.ie



ADVANCE ACCESS

PRODUCTS: Site access control systems, handsfree turnstiles, Bluetooth access control, temperature screening
CONTACT: Eoghan Connolly,
 Tel: 087 905 6764,
 Email: eoghan@advanceaccess.ie



TEC SECURITY

PRODUCTS: Fever detection face recognition solutions
CONTACT: Stephen Tyrrell,
 Tel: 01 404 5124,
 Email: tecsecurity@eircom.net



BLOCWORX

PRODUCTS: Software platform to digitise and manage processes and track business activity
CONTACT: Mark O'Sullivan
 Tel: 086 385 0363,
 Email: mark.osullivan@blocworx.com



CGA TECHNOLOGY

PRODUCTS: Solutions to manage compliance and health and safety. Compliance, safety, asset, training, contractor software
CONTACT: Steven Battersby,
 Tel: 087 335 5979,
 Email: sales@cgatechnology.com



PPENOW.ie

PRODUCTS: Quality, certified PPE products. Prompt delivery-Ireland. Fair price guarantee
CONTACT: Laurence Gavin,
 Email: info@ppenow.ie
 Web: www.ppenow.ie



RMIS ENGINEERING LTD

PRODUCTS: Mechanical Contracting services across all sectors
CONTACT: John Raleigh,
 Tel: 086 021 2111.
 Email: john@rmis.ie
 Web: www.rmis.ie



FORESIGHTHUB TECHNOLOGIES

PRODUCTS: Cloud-based safety software for smart devices, Manages Covid-19 compliance
CONTACT: Tel: 086 177 6572,
 Email: info@foresighthub.com
 Web: www.foresighthub.com



TYCO DISTRIBUTION

PRODUCTS: PPE, face masks, face visors, sanitizers, gloves
CONTACT: Barry Thornton/Hugh Hunt, Tel: 083 036 7197 /087 826 2544,
 Email: ciftyco@gmail.com
 Web: www.tycodistribution.com



BOYNESIDER OFFICE FURNITURE

PRODUCTS: Office furniture, PPE, and sanitizers
CONTACT: Simon O'Dea,
 Tel: 086 408 3012,
 Email: info@boynesider.com
 Web: www.boynesider.com



iSUPPLY PRINTING & SIGNAGE

SERVICES: Design, Print & signage, video experts with specialised Covid-19 products
CONTACT: Eddie Redmond,
 Tel: 085 864 0059,
 Email: eddie@isupply.ie
 Web: www.isupply.ie



VISION BUILT

PRODUCTS: Covid-19 WC Eco Pod mobile toilet facility in line with WHO guidelines
CONTACT: Julie Regan,
 Tel: 091 795505,
 Email: j.regan@vision-built.com
 Web: www.vision-built.com



HILTI IRELAND

PRODUCTS: Tool & software solutions for productive social-distancing compliance
CONTACT: Micheál Molloy,
 Tel: 087 989 2326,
 Email: Micheal.Molloy@hilti.com
 Web: www.hilti.ie

CIJ Commercial Partners are suppliers of equipment/services for your construction business



BEWISE

PRODUCTS: A full range of PPE and social distancing materials
CONTACT: Lee McCreery,
 Tel: 087 410 5947,
 Email: lee@jlmgifts.ie
 Web: www.bewise.ie



TOPCON

PRODUCTS: Sale, Hire & service of construction tools. (Lasers, BIM, UAV, Survey)
CONTACT: Joe Glennon,
 Tel: 01 897 5900.
 Email: jglennon@topcon.com
 Web: www.topconpositioning.com



LOUGHCREW ENTERPRISES

PRODUCTS: Hand sanitising stations
CONTACT: Tel: 086 775 5779 /049 854 1819,
 Email: padraig@houseofcorrigan.com
 Web: www.loughcrew-ent.com

Work Permits Ireland

WORKPERMITS IRELAND

SERVICES: Consultation, Critical/General/All other skills permit, visa, immigration
CONTACT: Colm Hilliard,
 Tel: 086 469 7939,
 Email: info@workpermits.ie
 Web: www.workpermits.ie



THE BELVEDERE HOTEL

SERVICES: Dublin city centre newly refurbished hotel. Special construction worker rate from €60
CONTACT: Agata Hajduk,
 Tel: 01 873 7700,
 Email: revenueamanager@belvederehotel.ie
 Web: www.belvederehoteldublin.com



PROLIFT HANDLING

PRODUCTS: Supply & service of lifting, material handling and height safety gear
CONTACT: Darragh Hickey,
 Tel: 086 780 9679,
 Email: darragh@prolift.ie
 Web: www.prolift.ie



XENON FEVER DEFENCE

PRODUCTS: Non-contact temperature-screening device
CONTACT: Sales Team,
 Tel: 086 842 6092.
 Email: sales@feverdefence.com
 Web: www.feverdefence.com



MIDLAND STEEL REINFORCEMENT SUPPLIES

PRODUCTS: Bespoke BIM rebar solutions, Modular rebar solutions
CONTACT: Michael O'Brien,
 Tel: 087 116 3201,
 Email: mobrien@midlandsteelsupplies.ie
 Web: www.midlandsteelsupplies.ie



SL DISTRIBUTION

PRODUCTS: Face masks, PPE equipment
CONTACT: Simon Linscheid,
 Tel: 086 997 2507,
 Email: simon@sldistribution.ie
 Web: www.sldistribution.ie



SHOOT CUT GRADE LTD

PRODUCTS: Construction sector video production & E-Learning specialists.
CONTACT: James Galvin,
 Tel: 01 437 8321,
 Email: sales@shootcutgrade.com
 Web: www.shootcutgrade.com



REACH GROUP

PRODUCTS: A diverse range of personal protective equipment and hygiene products
CONTACT: Aoife Ryan,
 Tel: 01 499 3562,
 Email: sales@reachgroup.ie
 Web: www.reachretailservices.ie



SAFETYFREELANCER

SERVICES: Outsource all your SHEQ on to our online bid website; 1,000 experts online.
CONTACT: Gavin Coyle,
 Tel: 086 220 0018,
 Email: gavin@safetyfreelancer.com
 Web: www.safetyfreelancer.com



FITZERS CATERING LTD

SERVICES: Catering specialists who can provide solutions to your venue or site
CONTACT: Sharon Fitzpatrick,
 Tel: 086 255 5651, Email: sharonfitzpatrick@fitzerscatering.ie
 Web: www.fitzerscatering.ie



ETAG FIXINGS IRELAND

PRODUCTS: Building materials, fixings, PPE, site consumables, social distancing solutions.
CONTACT: Damien Lynch/Dave O'Reilly,
 Tel: 086 389 4995/086 829 1010,
 Email: sales@etagfixings.com
 Web: www.etag.ie



HORIZON DIGITAL PRINT SOLUTIONS

PRODUCTS: Print & PPE, Safety signage, Site Hoardings, Building Mesh, Hat & Face Visors
CONTACT: Jeff Maguire,
 Tel: 087 234 2349,
 Email: jeff@horizondigitalprint.com
 Web: www.horizondigitalprint.com



AZZURRI SPORT

PRODUCTS: SWIFT-19 and AFNOR specification reusable barrier masks
CONTACT: Jack Molloy,
 Tel: 051-850055,
 Email: jackmolloy@azzurri.ie
 Web: www.azzurri.ie



THE WESTBURY HOTEL

SERVICES: Heart of Dublin city, 5* accommodation, meeting rooms and business centre
CONTACT: David Synnott,
 Tel: 083 129 9655,
 Email: david_synnott@doylecollection.comie



THE CROKE PARK

SERVICES: Voted the Top 10 Hotels in Ireland: Condé Nast Traveler 2020 Readers' Choice Awards
CONTACT: Muireann King,
 Tel: 087 775 0555,
 Email: Muireann_King@doylecollection.com



THE RIVER LEE

SERVICES: The River Lee hotel is one of Cork's leading business and social destinations.
CONTACT: Claire Myler,
 Tel: 021 493 7714,
 Email: claire_myler@doylecollection.com



CAUSEWAY TECHNOLOGIES

PRODUCTS: Causeway is a specialist software provider to construction market. Comprehensive range of project performance boosting software.
CONTACT: Mark Stefanyszyn,
 Tel: 077 721 42266,
 Email: mark.stefanyszyn@causeway.com

INDUSTRY NEWS

BRENDAN KEARNS CHOSEN AS IRISH AMBASSADOR FOR EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK 2020

European Vocational Skills Week 2020, which ran from 9th to 13th November, is an annual event, where local, regional or national organisations across the EU showcase the very best of vocational education and training (VET). It is a platform to make VET's potential more widely known, and an opportunity to exchange information and good practice across Europe and beyond.

The fifth year of the annual event, organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the German presidency of the Council of the European Union, comprised a series of partner activities that took place online, with many running or available online up to the new year.

Brendan Kearns, Director of Training, Designer Group, was chosen as the Irish ambassador for European Vocational Skills Week 2020. He says it was a great honour for him, but, more importantly, it was an opportunity to promote vocational skills and the opportunities that exist for young people in trades.

"I was honoured to be chosen for this



Brendan Kearns, Director of Training, Designer Group, and Ambassador, European Vocational Skills Week 2020.

role and have been delighted with the response from Irish contractors and other stakeholders in Irish construction. I was particularly happy about the way CIF and Solas got behind the programme in such a positive way.

"These are very challenging times, with the current pandemic affecting all studies and training Europe-wide. The chance to convey a positive message about the fantastic opportunities vocational education offers to everyone, regardless of age, gender, or background, was really taken up in Ireland. Everyone has talent, and VET can provide the practical skills, knowledge and competencies to succeed.

"My job is training director with Designer Group, which is one of Ireland's largest employers of apprentices. I began my career as an apprentice. Over the years, I progressed into a role where I can encourage the development of our people at Designer Group."

There were a total of 1,123 events in 32 countries, with 3.6 million people participating during European Vocational Skills Week 2020. There were a total of 34 Irish-based events and initiatives held during the week. **C**

To learn more about European Vocational Skills Week, visit www.ec.europa.eu

CIF'S GABRIEL MACGRATH NAMED 'ACCA ACCOUNTANT OF THE YEAR'

At the recent Association of Chartered Certified Accountants' (ACCA) annual charity event 2020, Gabriel MacGrath, Head of Finance, CIF, was announced as the ACCA 'Accountant of the Year 2020/2021'.

Gabriel MacGrath was thrilled to accept the award. Over a 26-year career, he has worked in various industry sectors and countries, including the USA, UK, Spain and China.

"I am delighted and truly honoured to be named as ACCA Accountant of the Year," Gabriel MacGrath commented when accepting the award. "I would like to thank my peers in ACCA so very much for this great honour. I have been lucky in my career to have travelled all over the world as an accountant. It is only when you work outside Ireland that you really see the global

brand of ACCA."

Gabriel MacGrath joined CIF in 2013 and is responsible for the finance function within the group. Since 2010, the finance function changed to a service centre covering both the CIF and the various pension and industry schemes. The production of key management reporting is vital for the various committees and trustees within the group, in addition to the annual statutory audit process.

The ACCA is the global body for professional accountants all over the world, and there are 13,000 members in Ireland alone.

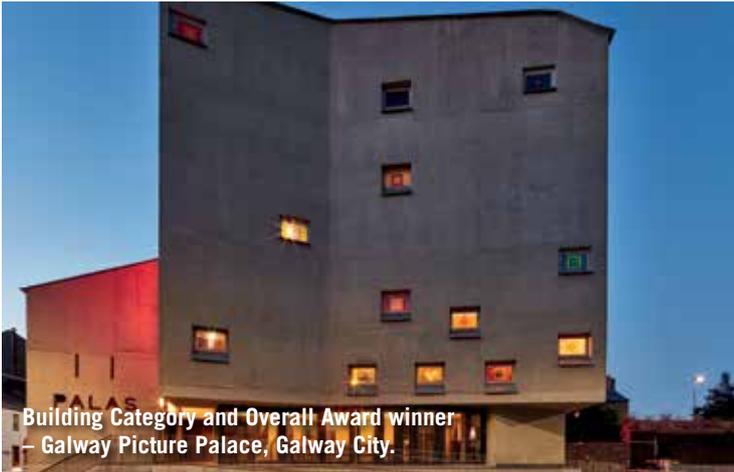
The ACCA Accountant of the Year award is presented to a member who distinguishes themselves in the field of accountancy. Gabriel MacGrath has been recognised because of his work promoting ACCA in and outside of work. **C**



Gabriel MacGrath, Head of Finance, CIF.

JJ RHATIGAN BUILT GALWAY PICTURE PALACE WINS IRISH CONCRETE SOCIETY AWARD

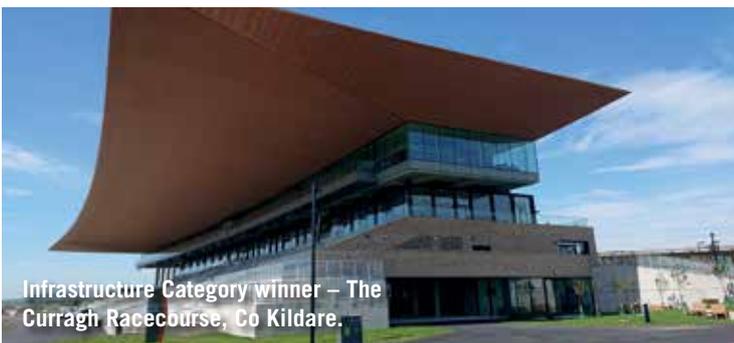
Excellence in concrete design and construction was celebrated at this year's Irish Concrete Society's Awards, with JJ Rhatigan and Company, John Sisk and Son, Roadbridge and Shay Murtagh Precast taking the top awards.



Building Category and Overall Award winner – Galway Picture Palace, Galway City.



Elemental Category winner – Grangegorman TUD Campus, Dublin.



Infrastructure Category winner – The Curragh Racecourse, Co Kildare.



International Award winner – Meridian Water Rail Station, Enfield, London.

The Galway Picture Palace, designed by dePaor architects for Element Pictures and built by JJ Rhatigan and Company, has won the Overall Award at the 38th Irish Concrete Society Awards.

For this year's awards, the main jury reviewed a total of 41 projects nominated in three categories – 'Element', 'Infrastructure', and 'Building' – of the main awards. There were also eight projects nominated for the 8th International Award, which was won by Shay Murtagh Precast for Meridian Water Rail Station, Enfield, London.

Speaking of the awards, Chairperson Eamon Booth stated, "While we were unable to hold our annual awards evening this year, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our winners and to recognise all of this year's entrants for raising the benchmark in quality and excellence in concrete construction through their combination of skill, ingenuity and teamwork. All nominees deserve great credit for setting such high standards for others in the industry to follow."

The main awards jury consisted of Michael Moriarty (TJ O'Connor and Associates), Peter Carroll (A2 Architects), and John Keaveney (John Paul Construction).

BUILDING AND OVERALL WINNER

The 'Building Category' winner and 'Overall Award' winner was Galway Picture Palace, Galway, built by JJ Rhatigan and Company

The jury said of the Galway Picture Palace that "it is a deeply entwined piece of city in the form of a modern-day tower house that is only made possible by the mystery and thickness that in-situ concrete has allowed here".

INFRASTRUCTURE AWARD

The 'Infrastructure Category' winner was The Curragh Racecourse, Co Kildare, by John Sisk and Son.

The jury said of the project, "Through the use of precast concrete elements, this racecourse stand manages to produce an extremely elegant and light interior with great precision and quality."

ELEMENTAL AWARD

The 'Elemental Category' winner was Grangegorman TUD Campus, Dublin, built by Roadbridge.

The jury said of this project, "Through the use of repetition, pattern and texture of a simple concrete pavior at the new Grangegorman Campus, the resulting public realm is transformed into a high-quality public surface for Technical University Dublin as it begins its new life."

INTERNATIONAL AWARD

The winner of the eighth 'International Award' was Shay Murtagh Precast for its work on the Meridian Water Rail Station, Enfield, London.

The judges were impressed by the quality, efficiency, and delivery of a complete railway station on programme and within budget. **C**

JOHN PAUL CONSTRUCTION EXPANDS ITS SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

John Paul Construction has announced the further strengthening of its senior leadership team, in line with its strategy of sustainable growth and expansion, with four new key appointments.

Mark O'Shea has been appointed Associate Director – Construction; Keith McConville, Associate Director – Surveying; Conrad Shannon, Associate Director – Surveying; and Colin Crowley, Regional Director – Ireland South and Europe.

Liam Kenny, Managing Director, John Paul Construction, congratulated Mark O'Shea, Keith McConville and Conrad Shannon on their promotion within the business, and he welcomed Colin Crowley into the construction firm.

Colin Crowley, who takes up the new role of Regional Director (Ireland South & Europe), has wide-ranging senior leadership experience internationally, having managed and delivered major construction projects in diverse locations around the world.

Liam Kenny said, "I wish each of the new appointments every success as the company enters this new and exciting chapter of its evolution." **C**



L to r: Keith McConville, Associate Director; Conrad Shannon, Associate Director; Liam Kenny, Managing Director; Colin Crowley, Regional Director; and Mark O'Shea, Associate Director, John Paul Construction.

SONICA MD NAMED ALL-IRELAND BUSINESS ALL-STAR ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Donnacha Neary, Managing Director, Sonica, has been named Entrepreneur of the Year at the annual All Ireland Business ceremony.

Described at the event as "the best at what you do", Donnacha Neary was recognised for the growth of Sonica over the past eight years and for his innovation and commitment to fit out and interior construction in Ireland and abroad.

Speaking about the win, Donnacha Neary said, "I'm honoured to have won this award, which is a true testament to the energy and dedication of our outstanding team at Sonica. It is recognition of our stellar year-on-year growth, during which we have become a viable alternative in the market and pulled ahead of our competitors. We've now entered an exciting new chapter for Sonica, where we are scaling rapidly, and not only growing, but flourishing on a national and international basis. While others are retrenching, we see opportunity in the marketplace. We are leveraging our agility to move faster and stronger than our competitors, and I have no doubt that the best is yet to come."



Donnacha Neary, Managing Director, Sonica.

Donnacha Neary's win comes as Sonica was also awarded the All-Ireland Business All-Star accreditation for the second year in a row.

The All-Ireland Business All-Star accreditation is an independently verified standard mark for indigenous businesses, based on rigorous selection criteria of performance, trust, and customer-centricity. The accreditation is overseen by the All-Ireland Business Foundation, whose adjudication panel is chaired by Dr Briga Hynes of the Kemmy Business School at the University of Limerick; and Kieran Ring, CEO of the Global Institute.

Dr Briga Hynes says, "Achieving this accreditation for the second year reflects Sonica's continued commitment to meet the guidelines set out by AIBF," she said. "We evaluate a company's background, trustworthiness, and performance, and we speak to customers, employees, and vendors. We also anonymously approach the company as a customer and report back on the experience. The business goes through at least two interviews and is scored on every part of the process against set metrics." **C**

COLLEN POLE2POLE 2020 CYCLE FUNDRAISER RAISES OVER €60,000 FOR CHARITIES

Collen Construction came up with a novel way to operate its annual cycle, while also following local Covid-19 guidelines, raising an incredible €61,000 in the process for a number of charities.

Over the past four years, the Collen Charity Cycle has been a great success, contributing to staff wellbeing and raising funds for local communities in which Collen operates.

Covid-19 presented several challenges for the Collen Cycle Committee. The end result was the Collen Pole2Pole Cycle, with over 260 Collen staff, clients, subcontractors and suppliers, as well as their families and friends in Ireland, Germany, Sweden UK, Crete, UAE, Italy, Hong Kong and the USA, completing the challenge over three days, while also staying apart. Overall, The goal was to collectively cycle 20,020kms, the total distance between the north and south pole.

The cycle took place across the weekend of the 25th to 27th September, with company Chairman Neil Collen and Managing Director Tommy Drumm taking part. Overall, the Collen teams cycled 25,562kms, raising a total of €61,000.

Charities that benefited include, Aoibhneas, Lighthouse Club, KF Heroes in Sweden, Hilfe für krebskranke Kinder Frankfurt, and many more.

Neil Collen said of this year's challenge, "In a normal year, we host many fundraising events. However, this year as a result of Covid-19, we had to cancel many of those activities and organised one really big event.

"It is truly amazing how much can be accomplished among like-



L to r: Alan Barnes, Project Manager, Collen Construction; John Egan, Executive, Safety & Training, CIF; Neil Collen, Chairman, Collen Construction; Tommy Drumm, Managing Director, Collen Construction; Loretto Dalton, Lighthouse Club; Orlagh Sweeney, Business Development Executive, Collen Construction.

-minded individuals. The extraordinary happens when a group of people set out together to achieve a common goal."

Loretto Dalton of the Lighthouse Club, one of the charities to receive a donation, said she was delighted to accept the cheque for €2,000.

"The Lighthouse Club is the construction industry's charity. The money raised will stay in the industry, and our aim is that 'no construction worker should be alone in a crisis'. The Lighthouse Club has a free 24/7 helpline (1800 939 122) for construction workers and their families, as well as a wellbeing app providing information, advice and guidance on many wellbeing topics including stress, anxiety, depression, anger and suicidal thoughts." **C**

HOUSING MINISTER VISITS WICKLOW SOCIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD recently met with the Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, Frank Curran and senior officials to discuss progress on the county's housing programme.

The Minister commended Wicklow County Council on its progress on delivery to date saying, "We share a common goal that we want all of our citizens to have access to good quality housing to purchase or rent at an affordable price. I am reassured that the council is committed, energised and mobilised to deliver on its ambitious delivery targets. I want to reiterate that my department and the relevant stakeholders are here to assist and support in realising that task. We know that demand has outstripped supply by some way and that it is crucial we increase supply. Homelessness remains a major problem, and one I am committed to helping our local authorities deal with."

Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, stated, "Wicklow is projected to exceed its target for housing delivery with an anticipated output of 1,297 housing units by 2021 over the three delivery streams of 'Build', 'Acquisition' and 'Lease'. This outcome highlights the critical focus and priority that has been firmly placed by Wicklow on responding to the housing challenge through the development and implementation of the delivery programme."

The Minister embarked on a whistle-stop tour, visiting the Homeless Hub facility at Fitzwilliam Road, refurbishment of which is nearing completion, and turning the sod at Hawkstown Park, Wicklow a development of 40 family homes by ABM Design and Build Ltd.

Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (centre), visits Cleary Doyle Construction's Jameson Heights social housing development in Kilmacanogue. Photograph by Michael Kelly Photos.



He then visited a housing development, by Linham Construction Ltd, on the site of the former FCA Hall at the Murrough in Wicklow, which will provide a further eight homes in 2020, finished the day with a visit to Jameson Heights in Kilmacanogue, a development of 20 homes being built by Cleary Doyle Construction Ltd in an area of particularly high housing demand. **C**

GROUNDFORCE PROVIDES COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR CORK WATER TREATMENT WORKS UPGRADE

Main contractor Murphy International, is currently undertaking a €40m contract, to upgrade the Lee Road Water Treatment Plant (WTP) in Cork city, on behalf of Irish Water. The Lee Road WTP provides approximately 70% of Cork city's total treated water supply. The upgraded plant will provide a more safe and secure water supply for the rapidly growing city.

The scope of works includes upgrading the existing WTP from its current capacity of 36,200 cubic metres per day, to a new plant with approximately 40,000 cubic metres over a 18-hour-period.

The CSA scope of work includes construction of a treated water reservoir, filter washwater holding tank, raw water pumping station, ultraviolet (UV) chamber, filter blocks, sedimentation tank, admin building, sludge processing building, process building, process pipework, drainage and utilities, pavement construction, fencing and landscaping.

The project's six underground reinforced concrete tanks require a number of major excavations, which, in turn, require structural support while the permanent works are carried out.

For this work, Murphy International employed Groundforce to supply its modular hydraulic props and waling beams, to support the steel sheet-piled cofferdam walls.

Groundforce equipment arrived on site in February 2020, when work started on the first cofferdam, to accommodate the reservoir tank. Measuring 48 metres x 30 metres x 5 metres deep, this excavation was supported with a cofferdam, comprising 10-metre-long Larssen L605 steel piles.

Joseph Lenihan, General Manager at Groundforce Ireland,



Lee Road Water Treatment Plant, Cork

comments, "Groundforce is delighted to be involved in the temporary works element of this critical infrastructure project. The temporary cofferdams required on this project are some of the largest seen on the island of Ireland in recent years. The solution proved economical thanks to effective collaboration between Murphy International, Byrne Looby and Groundforce." **C**

WESTPORT EQUIPMENT LAUNCH THE RAPID POST FOR TEMPORARY EDGE PROTECTION

Westport Equipment is a new equipment rental company founded by Liam Brew, who has a long history of working with safety and design-driven product solutions in the construction industry. Part of the drive behind this new business is to bring products to contractors that enhance safety and deliver value through efficiency and innovation.

In keeping with this drive, Westport Equipment is delighted to bring the Rapid-EPS (Edge Protection System) to the equipment rental market in Ireland. The Rapid-EPS system offers a unique post that secures itself against slabs above and below to provide a secure fixing location for the accompanying mesh panel with integrated toe board, and no drilling needed for installation.

The first client to take the product from Westport Equipment was the Comer Group at their Milner's Square Development in North Dublin.

Alan Mulligan, Project Manager, Comer Group, said, "The Rapid Post product immediately struck us for its simplicity and ease of installation. We saw further benefits by the removal of risks associated with moving large, heavy components of edge protection equipment around the site during installation and removal, and also risk with further lifting operations within the building. The components used, while robust steel products, also are easy to lift and easy to install. There is a place for this product in the tool-chest of safety kit at our disposal."

According to Liam Brew, the tool-free compression post has been designed for easy, quick installation. He said that when recently tested against other systems, the speed with which the Rapid Post and Panel can be installed was significantly faster, almost 10 times



Rapid EPS system in-situ.

faster than drill and fix systems allowing other trades to access work areas faster and reduce the labour costs considerably for the main contractor.

Liam Brew added, "The unique Rapid Panel offers the widest fixing centres on the market, meaning more panels can be installed in a shorter amount of time, and with fewer components to install, there is additional time and cost savings. Unlike scaffolding, the Rapid Post and Panel system requires no skilled labour and when asked, clients and installers have given the system the green light." **C**

FOR YOUR DIARY

Helping you plan ahead

JANUARY

Monday 11th, 4:00pm CECA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Location: Online
Contact: Denise Tuffy
Tel: 01 406 6066, Email: dtuffy@cif.ie

Tuesday 12th, 11:00am EXECUTIVE BODY MEETING

Location: Online
Contact: Gillian Heffernan
Tel: 01 406 6016, Email: gillian@cif.ie

Wednesday 13th, 3:00pm MBCA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

Location: Online
Contact: Denise Tuffy
Tel: 01 406 6066, Email: dtuffy@cif.ie

Monday 18th, 1:00pm CORK BRANCH EXECUTIVE MEETING

Location: Online
Contact: Brid Cody
Tel: 021 435 1410, Email: bcody@cif.ie

Tuesday 19th, 11:00am IHBA NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Location: TBC
Contact: Cathy Gurry
Tel: 01 406 6008, Email: cgurry@cif.ie

Thursday 21st, 1:00pm MID WEST BRANCH MEETING

Location: Online
Contact: Brid Cody
Tel: 021 435 1410, Email: bcody@cif.ie

Tuesday 26th, 1:00pm SOUTH-EAST BRANCH AGM

Location: Online
Contact: Ronan O'Brien
Tel: 021 435 1410, Email: robrien@cif.ie

Wednesday 27th, 1:00pm SOUTH-EAST BRANCH AGM

Location: Online
Contact: Ronan O'Brien
Tel: 021 435 1410, Email: robrien@cif.ie

Thursday 28th, 1:00pm M&ECA AGM

Location: Online
Contact: Jennifer Nisbet-Daly
Tel: 01 406 6000, Email: jnisbetdaly@cif.ie

FEBRUARY

Monday 8th, 1:00pm CORK BRANCH M&ECA / ECA AGM

Location: Online
Contact: Brid Cody
Tel: 021 435 1410, Email: bcody@cif.ie

Tuesday 2nd, 1:00pm CORK BRANCH MBCA/CECA/GENERAL CONTRACTORS AGM

Location: Online
Contact: Brid Cody
Tel: 021 435 1410, Email: bcody@cif.ie

Monday 8th, 1:00pm CORK BRANCH IHBA AGM

Location: Online
Contact: Brid Cody
Tel: 021 435 1410, Email: bcody@cif.ie

BUILDERS' ANNUAL LEAVE/PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2021

Friday	1st January	Public Holiday
Wednesday	17th March	Public Holiday
Friday	2nd April	Annual Holiday
Monday	5th April	Public Holiday
Tuesday	6th April	Annual Holiday
Wednesday	7th April	Annual Holiday
Thursday	8th April	Annual Holiday
Friday	9th April	Annual Holiday
Monday	3rd May	Public Holiday
Monday	7th June	Public Holiday
Monday	19th July to Friday 30th July	Annual Holiday
Monday	2nd August	Public Holiday



CIF TRAINING COURSES

Training Dates for January and February 2021 Live Training Webinars
 – Courses delivered online via Zoom. For more details visit www.ciftraining.ie

JANUARY 2021 COURSES	CODE	DAYS	DATES	TIMES
CIF IOSH Managing Safely in Construction	MSIC 4300	5 Days	6th, 13th, 20th, 27th January, 3rd February	9.30am-4.30pm
CIF QQI Level 5 Safety Representative	SR 4306	4 Days	7th, 8th, 14th, 15th January	9.00am-5:00pm
Appointed Persons Course	AP 4303	3 Days	11th, 18th, 25th January	9.00am-5.00pm
Conflict Management	COMA 4501	1 Day	12th January	9.00am-5.00pm
CIF QQI Project Supervisor Construction Stage	PSCS 4301	3 Days	12th, 19th, 26th January	9.00am-5.00pm
Microsoft Excel Introduction	MEI 4315	1 Day	18th January	9.00am-5.00pm
Delivering Operational Excellence	DOE 4500	1 Day	21st January	9.00am-5.00pm
Temporary Works Coordinator	TWC 4305	2 Days	21st, 22nd January	9.00am-5.00pm
NZEB Briefing	NZEB 4309	Half Day	22nd January	9.00am-1.00pm
Adjudication	ADJ 4312	1 Day	22nd January	9.30am-3.00pm
Microsoft Project Management [Master Class 1 Setting up, Tasks, Dependencies]	MPMI 1 4313	1 Day	25th January	9.00am-1.00pm
Microsoft Project Management [Master Class 2 Resources, Tasks, Views, Filters]	MPMI 2 4314	1 Day	25th January	2.00pm-5.00pm
Site Managers – A Practical Approach to Building Regulations	SMBR 4308	2 Days	25th, 26th January	9.00am-5.00pm
Payment Process under the Construction Contracts Act 2013	PPCC 4310	Half Day	26th January	9.30am-3.30pm
CIF Lifting Supervisor	LS 4307	1 Day	27th January	9.00am-5.00pm
Conflict Avoidance Management and Dispute Resolution Procedures	CAMD 4311	Half Day	27th January	9.30am-11.30am
CIF Site Supervisor Safety Programme	SSSP 4302	2 Days	28th, 29th January	9.00am-5.00pm
CIF Management & Inspection of Scaffolds	SI 4304	1 Day	29th January	9.00am-5.00pm

FEBRUARY 2021

CIF IOSH Managing Safely in Construction	MSIC 4316	5 Days	2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd February, 2nd March	9.30am-4.30pm
Appointed Persons Course	AP 4319	3 Days	8th, 15th, 22nd February	9.00am-5.00pm
CIF QQI Project Supervisor Construction Stage	PSCS 4317	3 Days	10th, 17th, 24th February.	9.00am-5.00pm
Negotiating Skills	NESK 4503	1 Day	11th February	9.00am-5.00pm
Coaching	COAC 4504	1 Day	12th February	9.00am-5.00pm
Conflict Avoidance Management and Dispute Resolution Procedures	CAMD 4328	Half Day	15th February	9.30am-11.30am
Microsoft Excel Advanced	MEA 4332	1 Day	15th February	9.00am-5.00pm
Microsoft Power BI Essentials	PBIE 4331	1 Day	23rd February	9.00am-5.00pm
MS Excel Data Visualisation	MEDV 4496	1 Day	26th February	9.00am-5.00pm
CIF Lifting Supervisor	LS 4324	1 Day	17th February	9.00am-5.00pm
Environmental Management for Construction Focusing on Land/Waste/Water	EMC 4320	2 Days	18th, 19th February	9.00am-5.00pm
Temporary Works Coordinator	TWC 4323	2 Days	18th, 19th February	9.00am-5.00pm
Adjudication	ADJ 4329	1 Day	22nd February	9.30am-3.00pm
Athena Women's Leadership	AWL 4502	1 Day	23rd February	9.00am-5.00pm
CIF Project Supervisor Design Process Working with the Assigned Certifier	PSDP 4322	2 Days	23rd, 24th February	9.00am-5.00pm
– A Site Manager's Approach	AC 4325	1 Day	24th February	9.00am-5.00pm
Conservation Theory for Heritage Contractors	CTHC 4330	1 Day	25th February	9.30am-5.00pm
CIF Site Supervisor Safety Programme	SSSP 4318	2 Days	25th, 26th February.	9.00am-5.00pm
Payment Process under the Construction Contracts Act 2013	PPCC 4327	Half Day	25th February	9.30am-1.30pm
NZEB Briefing	NZEB 4326	Half Day	26th February	9.00am-1.00pm
CIF Management and Inspection of Scaffolds	SI 4321	1 Day	26th February	9.00am-5.00pm



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