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SPIRALLING COSTS, DELAYS  
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DAMAGE – NEW REPORT CALLS FOR  
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FUNDED PROJECTS

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NEW CIF SURVEY SHOWS EFFECTS OF IRAN  
WAR ON CONSTRUCTION COSTS

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TURNUA ON THE ROLE DIGITAL SKILLS AND  
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# Editor's Notes

In this issue of Irish Construction Industry Magazine, we take a look at a new report from APM - the Association for Project Management - which takes a deep dive into how publicly funded projects are initiated, governed and delivered across the country. The report hones in on four projects in particular - the National Children's Hospital Project; the Arts Council's Business Transformation Programme (BTP); the OPW's Leinster House Bicycle Shed; and RTÉ's ERP and IT system. Throughout its research, APM found consistent issues across all four projects, namely a lack of governance and accountability that led to spiralling costs, delays and reputational damage. Commenting on the findings, Andrew Baldwin, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at APM, said it's clear there was a real need for project authority and leadership across all four of the projects. These aren't isolated cases - they reveal a pattern and if these projects demonstrate such a clear lack of governance, then it follows that other publicly-funded projects may be facing similar issues.

Elsewhere, we chat with Bernard McDermott, Construction Director at Turnua, about the role that digital skills and AI are set to play in construction. He also talks about the company's recent partnership with Future Academy and how it's set to help bridge the digital skills gap in Ireland's modern workforce. We also meet the latest recipients of Kirby Group's third-level bursary awards and take a look at Economist Jim Power's new report for Irish Steel, which examines how global geo-political issues are affecting Ireland's steel industry. Also in this issue, we take a look at the latest survey from the CIF, which measures the impact of the Iran war on construction costs. The survey found that rising costs are a concern for the industry, with 79% reporting a year-on-year increase in the cost of raw materials in Q4 2025. The Federation has warned that the recent surge in oil prices following the outbreak of war could further accelerate cost increases for the industry.

**We hope you enjoy this issue and if you have any comments or opinions, we'd love to hear from you, email [michael@irishconstruction.com](mailto:michael@irishconstruction.com)**

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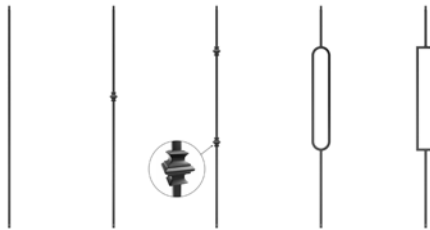


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## NEWS

### NIGEL TIGHE APPOINTED MD AT ACTAVO MODULAR

Actavo has announced the appointment of Nigel Tighe as the new Managing Director of Actavo Modular. As MD, he will lead the continued development and delivery of the division's growth strategy.

Nigel has 30 years of experience in the Irish construction sector and has delivered many complex and award-winning projects. With experience of several senior roles across the sector, he brings strong skills in strategy, client engagement and business development. Commenting on his new role,



Nigel said: "I am delighted to take on the role of Managing Director at Actavo Modular at such an exciting time for the business. Modular construction is playing an increasingly important role in delivering high-quality, sustainable buildings quickly and efficiently. I look forward to working with our talented team and valued clients to build on Actavo's strong reputation, drive innovation and continue delivering exceptional projects across Ireland and beyond."

### REDUCING IRELAND'S FOSSIL FUEL GENERATION

A new Energy Storage Grid Benefits Report from Energy Storage Ireland (ESI) and TNEI has found that long-duration energy storage could reduce Ireland's electricity grid fossil fuel generation by over 2 TWh annually – nearly 30% of projected fossil fuel use.

The study models a future all-island power system with 9 GW of onshore wind, 8 GW of solar and 5 GW of offshore wind, reflecting Ireland's Climate Action Plan ambitions. It examines how energy

storage can strengthen the grid, reduce renewable energy waste and displace fossil fuel generation. Under two modelling scenarios, the report finds that eight-hour storage portfolios would reduce fossil fuel generation by up to 1 TWh annually (the equivalent energy use of 238,000 Irish homes), while 100-duration storage, strategically deployed across the grid could reduce fossil fuel generation by up to 2 TWh annually, by shifting renewable energy from surplus periods into evening peak demand. The report also highlighted

one of the growing challenges in Ireland's electricity system – renewable dispatch down. In 2025, approximately 1.72 TWh of renewable energy in Ireland was constrained or curtailed; in the modelled 2035 system this would increase to 11 TWh annually due to surplus generation and network constraints. However, long-duration energy storage would significantly reduce this renewable energy waste – reducing import costs and lowering consumer bills.

### EIB BACKS €260M SOLAR PORTFOLIO ACROSS IRELAND



The European Investment Bank (EIB) has agreed to support the construction and operation of four new utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) projects across Ireland, with a €100 million project finance loan to Dolmen Solar

Ltd, a holding company of Power Capital Renewable Energy. The 395 MWp portfolio will increase Ireland's renewable electricity generation, contribute to EU and national 2030 climate targets and forms part of the EIB's REPowerEU support for accelerating the clean energy transition. The four new schemes will be built in County Clare, County Wicklow, County Wexford and County Tipperary.

Together they are expected to generate around 367 GWh of clean electricity per year, equivalent to the annual consumption of roughly 79,900 households, and avoid approximately 114,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

annually compared to conventional generation. The €260 million total investment will create new jobs during construction and once operational, as well as creating local contracting opportunities for civil works, grid connections and maintenance services.

The new initiative represents one of the largest single solar investments financed to date in Ireland and will contribute directly to Ireland's target of 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and the national ambition for around 8 GW of installed solar capacity under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS).

## NEWS DESK

### NEW BUILDING ON WATERFORD CRYSTAL SITE

A €43m flagship building of Ireland's first co-located university enterprise quarter has been launched on the former Waterford Crystal manufacturing site. Building One at Glassworks will eventually house 800 employees, almost two decades after the closure of the landmark facility on the outskirts of Waterford City.

### REJUVENATION IN LEITRIM

Crosserlough Construction is set to start work on a major rejuvenation project in Drumshanbo shortly. The €7m project will provide a total town centre revamp by breathing new life into the old Bank of Ireland site and adjoining buildings by transforming them into the EXCHANGE Smart Hub Facility. The project is also set to enhance the riverside with a walkway and new amenities.

### 725 HOMES IN RATHBORNE

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, James Browne has officially marked the next phase of construction for a new social and cost rental housing development of 725 homes at Rathborne in Dublin. Rathborne will deliver 725 homes across six blocks, including 399 Cost Rental homes and 326 social homes.

## NEW CHAIRPERSON OF CIF CORK BRANCH



Patsy Supple has been appointed the new Chairperson of the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) Cork branch. Outgoing Chairperson Cian O'Mahony of Cumnor Building and Civil Engineering Contractors handed over the chain at the organisation's AGM held in Little Island. Patsy Supple is a Director at Mavro Property Ltd, with 35 years of experience in the building and property sector.

## GILBERT-ASH CELEBRATES DOUBLE TOPPING OUT

Gilbert-Ash celebrated a milestone with the topping out of Premier Inn Jervis Street and Premier Inn O'Connell Street, in the centre of Dublin. The ceremonies for both hotels were attended by Gilbert-Ash, client Whitbread PLC, which owns Premier Inn and key project stakeholders.

Premier Inn Jervis Street is a 215-bedroom hotel reshaping a prominent corner at the intersection of Jervis Street and Abbey Street Upper. The project includes the demolition of the existing building and

construction of a seven-storey building plus a basement and roof, with an onsite restaurant and bar on the ground floor overlooking Wolfe Tone Park. Premier Inn O'Connell Street is a 229-bedroom hotel located within the Clerys Quarter redevelopment. The works include construction of an eight-storey building plus a basement and roof, with restaurant and reception to ground floor. Both hotels are due for completion at the end of 2026 and are scheduled to open and welcome guests in early 2027.



## ACTAVO APPOINTS NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Actavo has announced the appointment of Patrick McMahon to the position of Chief Financial Officer. In his new role, he will lead the company's financial operations, providing strategic direction and financial planning to support Actavo's continued growth. Patrick brings over 15 years of senior leadership experience across the energy, utilities and home services sectors. He brings a forward-looking approach to financial leadership that aligns closely with Actavo's core value of 'Perform as a Team'. He has held several senior international finance roles, including serving as Vice President of Finance at Direct Energy



Services in North America and as Chief Financial Officer at Bord Gáis Energy. Earlier in his career, he led the finance

function at British Gas Home Services.

Commenting on his appointment, he said: "I am excited to join Actavo at this critical juncture in its growth journey. The company's service delivery model, supported by its dedicated teams, has significant potential for growth. I am looking forward to working closely with Keith and the wider team to continue to drive the business forward and deliver for our customers, colleagues and shareholders."

## NEW TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS MANAGER AT WILO IRELAND

Paul Mannion has been appointed as the new Technical Solutions Manager at Wilo Ireland to oversee the delivery of advanced water treatment and management services.

With more than 30 years of experience in the water management sector, Paul's career spans the restructuring of public water services in Ireland and includes extensive expertise in pumping station design, installation, onsite system assessment and energy auditing. In his new role, he aims to work closely with contractors, equipping them with the technologies and support they need



to deliver water treatment and management projects efficiently, sustainably and cost-effectively. Paul said: "I am delighted to be joining the Wilo team and am very excited about the future as we expand our water management services. My experience across the sector has given me a clear understanding of what is needed at every stage of the supply chain to achieve the best results. I look forward to collaborating with contractors to deliver our shared ambition of advancing water management services."

## NEWS

### BIDREVIEW TO HELP SMEs ASSESS BID QUALITY BEFORE SUBMISSION

BidReview, a new Irish platform designed to introduce an independent review step into the tendering process, has launched. The platform acts as “the auditor for your tender”, said founder Tony Corrigan. Ireland’s public procurement market is worth more than €21 billion annually, yet one in four Government contracts receive one or zero bids. Despite 80% of contracts being won by SMEs, the majority of small and medium-sized businesses do not compete for them. Built from analysis of more than 750 winning tenders and over 3,500 public sector competitions, BidReview scores submissions against the core pillars used by government evaluators. The platform provides businesses with an evidence-based assessment of competitiveness



before submission, identifying where proposals are strong and where improvement is required. BidReview aims to make “bid review” a standard step in the tendering process and is targeted at business owners and managing directors of companies who view public contracts as a growth channel

but lack clarity on competitiveness before submission. “You wouldn’t submit your company accounts without an independent audit. You wouldn’t launch a product without testing it. Yet businesses regularly submit €250,000 tenders without any objective assessment of their likely score. BidReview will fill that gap. AI tools have made it faster to generate a bid but faster doesn’t mean better. Because of AI’s use in tendering, evaluators are now seeing more generic submissions. But the real advantage comes from understanding how a buyer will actually score your response. That’s what BidReview is built to do,” said Tony Corrigan.

### COWI APPOINTS EVA MACINNES AS SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, UK & IRELAND



International engineering consulting group, COWI, has appointed Eva MacInnes as Senior Vice President for UK and Ireland and Managing

Director of its UK business. In the role, MacInnes will lead COWI’s UK operations and oversee growth and performance across the UK and Ireland, working closely with international teams to strengthen delivery across infrastructure, energy and transport. MacInnes, who will be based in Glasgow, joined COWI in 2013 as a geotechnical engineer and has progressed through a series of senior leadership roles, including Regional Director for Scotland, Vice President for Operations and most recently Head of Engineering. Her experience spans detailed geotechnical design and delivery on major transport and energy infrastructure schemes, including complex bridge works

and rail programmes. In more recent leadership roles, she has overseen multidisciplinary engineering teams and supported project delivery across long-term infrastructure frameworks in the UK. “I’m stepping into this role at a time of real opportunity and investment across the UK and Ireland, particularly in areas such as water, energy and transport. We’re already working on many of the programmes shaping that next phase of delivery and COWI is well placed to help our customers deliver critical infrastructure.”


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## Lack of governance

*Andrew Baldwin at APM on why cross-project issues in Ireland reflect the need for continued attention on reform of project delivery*

**A new report from the Association for Project Management has called for the continued reform of how publicly funded projects are initiated, governed and delivered across the country.**

APM – the chartered membership organisation for the project profession – aims to advance the understanding of project management through policy and academic research. The association operates across several regions including the UK, the Middle East, Hong Kong and Australia. The Irish network was set up in 2025.

The report, entitled “Cross-project issues in Ireland”, identifies repeating structural weaknesses that have led to spiralling costs, delays and reputational damage and focuses on four projects in particular – the National Children’s Hospital Project; the Arts Council’s Business Transformation

Programme; the OPW’s Leinster House Bicycle Shed; and RTÉ’s Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and IT system. “It was clear from our findings that there is a real need for project authority and leadership in all four of the projects that we looked at. A focus on skills development is also needed, along with an emphasis on accountability and transparency around public spending. Communication to the public around spending decisions should also be a priority,” said Andrew Baldwin, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at APM.

These cases aren’t isolated mishaps; they reveal a pattern, says Andrew. “Ambiguity in accountability, weak business cases and poor procurement discipline are recurring across sectors. We’re glad to see that the Government is addressing this with the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce, but there needs to be continued focus on strengthening

**A focus on skills development is also needed, along with an emphasis on accountability and transparency around public spending**

project leadership, skills and standards to restore public trust in megaprojects and megaproject delivery. An example of the lack of governance and accountability in the report describes a situation where almost 60 warning letters about a specific project were sent to a senior civil servant and ignored or not shared with higher-ranking officials. That seemed to be replicated across the four different projects.” Why were those warnings not shared? “That’s something that needs to be investigated with the Government. We’re in the process of conducting research with the University of Limerick on that issue. It may come down to a lack of comprehension when a project is going wrong or an inability to ask the right questions.”

Some of the findings from the report were surprising. “I think the fact that some of the same issues kept cropping up – mainly a lack of governance and accountability – was surprising. All four of the projects struggled in the same areas. If the same issues kept reoccurring across those four particular projects, the concern would be that those issues are impeding other projects too.”

The butt of many a joke in 2024, the Bicycle Shed project demonstrates what can happen when a lack of governance prevails.

“There was no value for money assessment carried out on that project. The benefits clearly didn’t justify the huge cost. However, I think the OPW has learned from it and I’d love to work with them to extend those learnings. Ultimately I think it’s odd that at no stage did anyone take a step back and say hang on, this seems to be a lot of money for a bike shed.” A lack of checks and balances led to an escalation of costs and a national outcry about the €336,000 spent on a shelter for 36 bikes.

With the Children’s Hospital there are two prevailing issues, says Andrew. “The project seemed to be inhibited by the Covid pandemic, as of course all projects were at the time, but it’s clear that no social and economic factors were considered. We always say that the likelihood of a pandemic of that nature is quite low, but there should have been an acknowledgement that something of a catastrophic nature could occur, especially given the world economy. However, the primary issue in my opinion is the confusion around the PwC review and who was actually

responsible for what.” Again, that comes down to governance. “If people don’t know what they’re in control of, they’re not in a position to make decisions. If you’re not making decisions, then suddenly a project will begin to creep up in time and costs.”

If Andrew were to choose one recommendation that would have the biggest impact on projects being completed on time and budget, what would it be? “For me, it would be an enhanced focus on skills development, research into and investment in project expertise within government-led projects and publicly funded projects. There are plenty of decent project managers within the Government so let’s use them and train a lot more people so they’re also equipped with the skills to deliver these projects. There are some very significant projects in the pipeline – we need to try and avoid these issues going forward.”

### **The Arts Council’s Business Transformation Programme Project**

The Arts Council Executive and Senior Management were responsible for sponsoring, approving funding for and delivering the taxpayer-funded Business Transformation Programme (BTP). The project relied



**Andrew Baldwin, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, APM**

on many stakeholders, with two external suppliers critical to its success: Expleo focused on quality assurance, whilst Codec focused on implementation.

The BTP project was designed to replace the Art’s Council’s legacy grants system, with a modern digital platform, to enhance workflow relationship management and business processes. The project failed, which resulted in a loss valued at €5.3m. The Government ordered an external review into the Arts Council’s operations in 2025.

The project delivery date was envisioned for between July 2019 and May 2021, however, it was paused in late 2023. After a cost-benefit analysis, the decision was made to discontinue it in June 2024. If the project continued, it would not have been ready until 2028. The initial budget was €3m. The final expenditure totalled €6.67m and €1.2m of this was valued as ‘reusable’.

### **The National Paediatric Hospital Project**

The National Paediatric Hospital Project, also known as the ‘Children’s Hospital’, is the most sizable investment programme ever conducted by Ireland’s healthcare system. It was designed to combine the services of three tertiary children’s hospitals. The project has faced many issues since its inception, which has led to mounting costs and delays and consequently, high levels of scrutiny of: the client; the National



*There are plenty of decent project managers within the Government so let’s use them and also train a lot more people so they’re equipped with the skills to deliver these projects*

Paediatric Development Board (NPHDB); the main contractor BAM Ireland; Turner and Townsend, responsible for project management and cost control; Arup and AECOM, the design engineers; and O’Connell Mahon & NBBJ, the design architects.

The project’s original deadline was 2023, however, at time of writing it remains under construction on the campus of St. James’s Hospital. The initial budget was €790m, however, as of 2024 it was forecasted at €2.24bn, not accounting for additional contractor claims of €856m in 2025.

### The Office of Public Works’ Leinster House Bicycle Shed Project

The OPW was responsible for planning, procuring, project managing and financially overseeing the delivery of a covered bicycle project, holding 36 bikes on the parliamentary complex, which was delivered by external contractors and suppliers.

This project differs from the others, in that it was delivered close to schedule (planned: mid January 2024, delivered: mid-April 2024), budget (original: €350,00, exc. VAT, final: €336,000, inc. VAT) and scope (albeit an inadequate scope). The project gained notoriety due to its disproportionate original and final cost of €336,000 for a modest bicycle shed, which led to widespread public criticism. Further developments revealed that the project did not have a formal business case, it was procured through a standard OPW framework and due to its budgetary value, no value-for-money



assessment was officially required or used. OPW stated in September 2024 that: “This level of expenditure is not consistent with the scale of the project under consideration – a covered bicycle facility” and requested an audit be conducted.

### RTÉ’s Enterprise Resource Planning and IT system project

The broadcaster, RTÉ, developed an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and IT project which aimed to replace five legacy systems used by Finance and HR at RTÉ, which were at or near end of life. It was funded from the proceeds of RTÉ’s land sale in 2017. RTÉ’s ‘big bang’ deployment approach intended to roll out both HR and Finance systems simultaneously, which ultimately was unsuccessful. The ERP project was planned for 2021 but failed and was written off in April 2025. The initial budget for the project was undisclosed by RTÉ, but the final cost came to €3.6m.

*The project gained notoriety due to its disproportionate original and final cost for a modest bicycle shed which led to widespread public criticism*

### APM’s recommendations to drive future success of projects across Ireland

- Establish clear accountability and transparency around public spending and communication of spending decisions. An examination of project standards and processes across all areas of projects
- The Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce must continue to consult project professionals from existing internal and external bodies on how the Government should lead project delivery and consider the creation of a new Project-Delivery Authority
- Research into, and investment in, project expertise in both Government-led projects and publicly funded projects. A focus on enhancing project disciplines where weaknesses have been identified
- Enhanced focus on continuous professional development and skills in projects. Consideration of the training and resource already available and develop this across Government departments and public bodies



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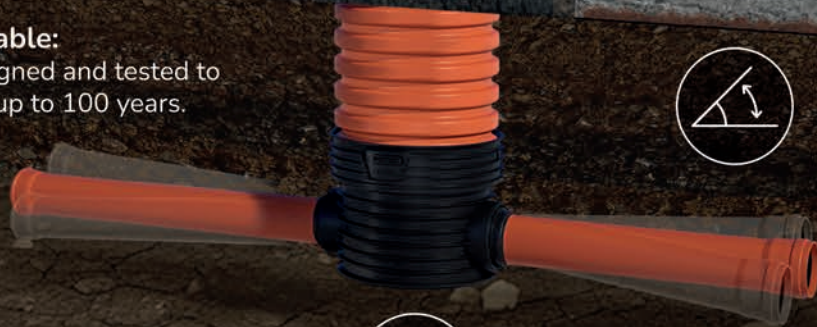
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# New order growth hits four-year high

*First rise in construction activity in 10 months with marked expansion of new orders*



The latest AIB Ireland Construction PMI® data signalled a renewed rise in activity in the sector during February, ending a period of reduction stretching back to May last year. The expansion in activity was recorded amid continued improvements in demand conditions. With workloads rising, firms took on extra staff and purchased additional inputs. Meanwhile, input costs continued to increase sharply, albeit at a slightly softer pace than at the start of the year.

The headline seasonally adjusted AIB Ireland Construction Total Activity Index moved back above the 50.0 no-change mark in February, posting 52.1 from 48.6 in January. The modest expansion in activity midway through the opening quarter of the year ended a nine-month sequence of contraction. The rise in total construction activity reflected renewed expansions in work on both housing and commercial projects in February. The sharper increase was for commercial, where activity grew solidly. The rise in housing activity was the first in 10 months. Meanwhile, civil engineering activity continued to

fall, albeit to the least extent in the current ten-month sequence of decline.

Anecdotal evidence from the survey indicated that the rise in construction activity was in response to improving demand conditions. New orders increased for the third successive month in February, and at a marked pace that was the strongest since February 2022. Higher new orders and the start of new projects encouraged constructors to expand their purchasing activity and workforce numbers in February.

Employment rose modestly, extending the current sequence of jobs growth to four months, with the latest increase the most marked since January 2025. The rise in input buying was the strongest in almost four years. Sub-contractor usage was also up, the third month running in which this has been the case. Meanwhile, their availability fell to the largest extent since May last year. Construction firms continued to face sharply rising input costs, with panellists reporting higher metals prices in particular. The rate of inflation remained elevated

**Anecdotal evidence from the survey indicated that the rise in construction activity was in response to improving demand conditions**

despite easing slightly from that seen in January. Suppliers' delivery times continued to lengthen, with delays linked to factors including shortages of couriers and Dublin port congestion. Expectations of further increases in new orders supported ongoing confidence in the year-ahead outlook for construction activity. Companies remained strongly optimistic, albeit slightly less so than was the case at the start of the year.

Commenting on the survey results, John Fahey, AIB Senior Economist, said: "The AIB Irish Construction PMI survey for February showed that the sector experienced an expansion in activity levels for the first time since April 2025. The headline index printed above the key breakeven level of 50, with a reading of a 52.1. This is consistent with a modest pace of growth last month and compares to 48.6 in January. The sectoral breakdown indicates that growth was driven by two of the three sub-sectors. The best performing of the three was commercial activity. It registered its first expansion in four months and at its highest level since the end of the first quarter of 2025.

"Meanwhile, the residential sector returned to growth for the first time in ten months, albeit the pace of expansion was marginal. Elsewhere, civil engineering retained its position as the weakest of the three sub-sectors, although the rate of contraction eased for the third consecutive month.

Some of the other key underlying details in the February survey provide further signs of encouragement for the construction sector. The new orders index, which is viewed as a leading indicator, posted its third successive month of expansion, with the pace of increase at its fastest in four years. Against the backdrop of expanding activity levels and an improving pipeline of projects, construction firms increased their staffing levels for the fourth month in-a-row. Meanwhile, Irish construction firms continued to hold an optimistic view on the prospect of increasing activity levels over the coming 12 months, albeit the strength of sentiment in this regard did ease compared to January."

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## #MakeltVisible

*Elliott Group and Lighthouse Charity join up to deliver site-based #MakeltVisible message*



**Elliott Group has partnered with the Lighthouse Charity to raise awareness of the importance of positive wellbeing across their business.**

The #MakeltVisible On Site initiative sees a team of experienced tradespeople visiting construction sites across Ireland and the UK. Tour ambassadors Fergus Farrell and Sam Wilson led the event, sharing their own lived experiences in a down to earth and relatable way, kickstarting conversations around mental health in construction. They also highlighted the importance of physical wellbeing, site safety and the many routes to support that the charity offers.

To extend the message of support with their teams, Elliott's captured the visit on video, which features members of the Lighthouse Charity's #MakeltVisible team speaking directly within a live construction environment, sharing a clear and practical message around support, awareness and looking out for one another. The video is now being shared across Elliott Group channels,

encouraging greater awareness of the support available, reducing the stigma around asking for help and reminding those working across the industry that support is always within reach.

Speaking about the collaboration, Matthew O'Dowd, HSEQ Director at Elliott Group, said:

"Construction is a demanding industry and it's vital that we continue to normalise conversations around wellbeing and support. Partnering with the Lighthouse Charity allows us to bring an important message directly to our people and the wider industry – that help is there, that it's okay to speak up and that looking out for one another is everyone's responsibility."

The Lighthouse Charity provides 24/7 holistic support to its Ireland and UK construction community on all aspects of emotional, physical and financial wellbeing. They offer a free and confidential 24/7 helpline, live web chat service and text facility which provides a range of information, guidance and support on a huge variety of wellbeing issues. These services

**Construction is a demanding industry and it's vital that we continue to normalise conversations around wellbeing and support**

are complemented by their free self-support app, along with their Lighthouse Beacons who provide a safe space for people to share concerns.

Sarah Bolton, CEO of the Lighthouse Charity, added, "We're delighted to be partnering with Elliott Group to raise awareness of the support available to their teams and letting people know that they are not alone. A crucial part of our work is offering proactive measures to support our community and our #MakeltVisible initiative reaches some of our industry's most vulnerable workers.

"Elliott's commitment to creating a safe, supportive working environment will encourage open conversations where people feel able to share their concerns without the fear of judgement or stigma," she added.

If you or anyone you know is struggling, reach out for 24/7 free and confidential support now: 24/7 helplines; 1800 939 122 (ROI) 0345 605 1956, (UK) Live chat [www.lighthousecharity.org](http://www.lighthousecharity.org) Text HARDHAT to 50808 (ROI) or 85258 (UK) Find out more at [www.lighthousecharity.org](http://www.lighthousecharity.org)

**About The Lighthouse Charity**  
The Lighthouse Charity provides 24/7 holistic support to the UK and Ireland construction community on all aspects of emotional, physical and financial wellbeing. They offer a free and confidential 24/7 helpline, live web chat service and text facility which provides a range of information, guidance and support on a huge variety of wellbeing issues. These services are complemented by their free self-support app, along with their Lighthouse Beacons who provide a safe space for people to share concerns. The Lighthouse's Charity's #MakeltVisible initiative aims to reach some of the industry's most vulnerable workers and visits construction sites across the country to spread the message of support.

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# In safe hands

*Nicola Cooling at Gilbert-Ash is laying the foundations for a rewarding career*

**When Nicola Cooling walks onto a construction site, she can't help but feel protective of the team she is working with.** Through warmth and understanding, she is showing that staying safe on a construction site is about more than just enforcing rules and regulations.

A Health & Safety Co-Ordinator with contractor, Gilbert-Ash, Nicola has spent the last two years working across some of Dublin's most prominent hospitality projects, including the landmark citizenM Hotel and now at the Clery's South Quarter and Twilfit House Premier Inn developments. That enthusiasm has led to her being a trusted presence on site, valued by the organisation and the wider community. Construction was never part of Nicola's plan, but when the opportunity came, she embraced it and discovered a career that she truly loves.

"I've worked in commercial facilities management for over 15 years," Nicola says. "Believe it or not, I started out in event management and sales, but I just wasn't enjoying it. No matter what I did, I always fell back into health and safety one way or the other. When the opportunity with Gilbert-Ash presented itself to me, it just felt natural."

Nicola initially joined Gilbert-Ash through an agency, taking time to test whether the industry and the role were the right fit, a decision that ultimately led to a long-term career with the company.

"I wasn't sure if it was what I wanted to do. I wanted to feel the waters and see how I felt, especially as I was entering what is seen as a male dominated industry. But I fitted right in and moved into the health & safety role." She discovered an industry that completely changed her perspective on what the construction industry really involved. "I was quite apprehensive and very unsure about what to expect. I had expectations or visions in my head of what it was going to be like and it was actually the complete opposite," she said. That experience often mirrors the wider experience of many women who enter construction. Despite being a sector full of varied roles and long-term career paths, construction remains male-dominated.

It's against this backdrop that Gilbert-Ash has joined Women in Construction Ireland (WICI), an organisation dedicated to supporting

and empowering women in the sector through mentorship, professional development and advocacy. The move reflects Gilbert-Ash's commitment to inclusion, growth and cultural change. "There's very much a family feel at Gilbert-Ash," she says. "It's very inclusive, there's a lot of diversity within the company and different perspectives. There is a strong culture of learning and growth, which leads to great opportunities to develop your professional career."

While compliance, risk assessments and safety procedures form part of her role, Nicola is clear that real safety begins with awareness and empathy.

"My role in health and safety is broad. I naturally take people under my wing, providing guidance and support and often become a trusted point of contact on site, looking out for everyone." She operates an open-door policy, making it clear that her role extends beyond the traditional boundaries of health and safety. I make it clear to everyone that they can come to me, not just about health and safety, but about anything they may be concerned about. I place a strong emphasis on mental health and want the team to know that it's always okay to talk."

In an industry where pressure and physically demanding work can be the norm, she recognises how personal challenges can spill into the workplace and sometimes with serious consequences.

"People have a lot of stuff going on at home and elsewhere. If you're feeling the pressures of work on top of pressures at home, it can lead to accidents," she explained. If someone needs time out - whether that's stepping away, having a coffee, or taking a short walk - then I'm there to support them."

Nicola makes a point of knowing everyone on site by name, greeting them and checking in - small actions which she believes make a significant difference. "You can look at someone's demeanour and you can tell how they are. We have mental health first aid training and because a lot of the contributing factors to accidents are complacency - if your mind is elsewhere it could lead to an accident. It's about awareness, looking at who's coming onto the site, if they are fit for



their job, and assessing the situation, especially if someone is working on lifting operations or working at height."

The social nature of the role is one of the reasons why she loves her career in construction. "I love to be out, mixing with people, talking to people and building relationships," she continued. "My current role suits me down to the ground. I look forward to coming into work in the morning - I get to have the craic, we get to have great banter and we all take great pride in our projects." For Nicola, one of the most rewarding aspects of construction is being part of an industry "that builds and creates lasting impact". She spoke about the sense of achievement that came with seeing her first major project reach completion.

"When I pass the citizenM Hotel, I get a great sense of pride. That was the first project I was part of and when we reached completion, I was like, wow, I was a part of that!"

For women considering construction, Nicola is passionate about taking the leap. "For anybody who is thinking about getting into construction, especially health and safety, I would advise them to go for it. It's so vast, there's so many areas to the industry. Every day is a new day."

**There's very much a family feel at Gilbert-Ash, it's very inclusive, there's a lot of diversity within the company and different perspectives**

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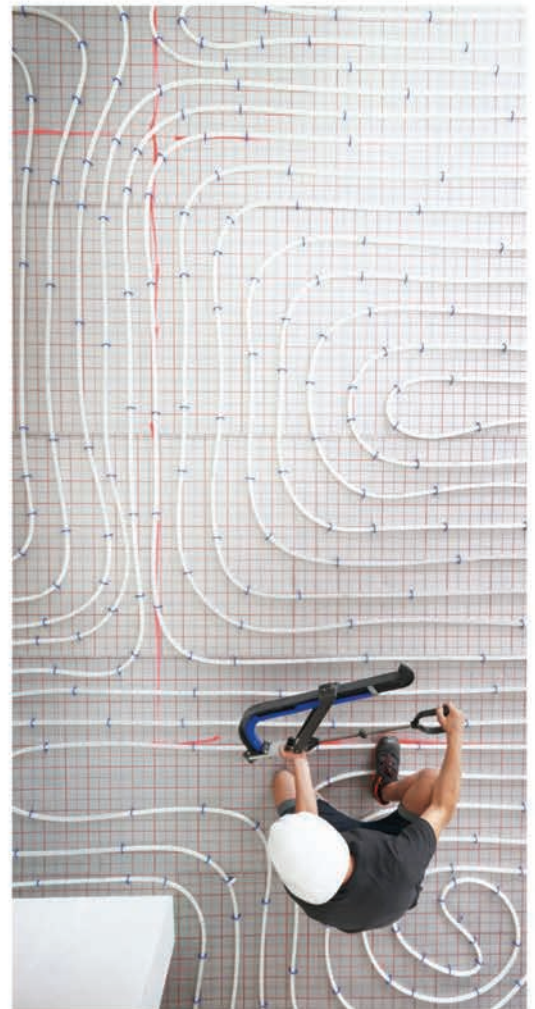
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**ANOTHER GAME CHANGER FROM PIPELIFE**



Joanne Treacy, Southern Regional Director, CIF

**The Construction Industry Federation is calling for sustained strong leadership to further grow the number of women employed in the sector to support the drive to meet Ireland's housing, infrastructure and climate challenges.** Current CIF figures show that 11% of those employed in construction in Ireland are women.

Speaking in the lead-up to the CIF's International Women's Day Summit, CIF CEO Andrew Brownlee said: "To meet Ireland's urgent, complex and interconnected housing, infrastructure and climate challenges, we require the very best minds and the broadest range of talent available. That must include women. Right now, just 11% of the 191,000 people employed in construction in Ireland are women. While progress is steady, it is still slow, and that's a figure we simply can't ignore. We can't afford, economically or socially, to draw from only half the population. The challenge is too big and the opportunity to attract and retain the best talent to our industry is too important."

CIF's International Women's Day Summit is highlighting pathways

to careers in construction for women, including via STEM subjects and construction-related apprenticeships. A highlight of the half-day event was a live-streamed Q&A, chaired by reigning Rose of Tralee and apprentice electrician Katelyn Cummins, between a panel of graduate apprentices and a group of students at Ardscoil Rath Iomghain school in Rathangan, Co Kildare, who are taking part in the STEM Passport for Inclusion programme, an initiative supported by the CIF. Also on the line-up, Marie Gleeson, former Irish Navy captain, shared her expertise on leadership excellence with the 600-plus event attendees from across the country.

Andrew continued: "The construction industry is rapidly digitalising and modernising. The on-site roles in trades, engineering and project management, are only part of the story. There are careers in digital construction, sustainability, off-site manufacturing, planning, finance, health and safety, design, communications and leadership. There truly is something for almost every interest and skillset, on site and off site. Construction-related apprenticeships are a key opportunity for more women, with

***The CIF is committed, alongside our members, to building a more diverse and inclusive workforce where people can reach their potential***

## Celebrating female expertise

*Greater representation of women is essential for meeting Ireland's housing, infrastructure and climate challenges*

latest figures showing that women make up almost 10% of people undertaking apprentices in Ireland."

He added: "I'm continually encouraged by the work many CIF members are doing to lead the way and who are sending a strong message about the kind of industry we want to be. Across our membership, I see real effort going into mentoring, inclusive recruitment practices and enhancing workplace policies. That leadership matters. It helps set the tone for the wider sector."

Joanne Treacy, Southern Regional Director with CIF and MC of the International Women's Day Summit, said: "The CIF is committed, alongside our members, to building a more diverse and inclusive workforce where people can reach their potential. Our industry is changing and evolving every day and we will become even stronger as our workforce diversifies."

"Our International Women's Day Summit, which this year has the theme 'Give to Gain', showcased an exceptional line-up of leading female experts to illustrate to women and girls from school-age onwards the vast opportunities a career in construction can bring. The programme featured authoritative voices on creating inclusive workplaces, the principles of leadership excellence, the transformative impact of digitalisation and the broader value of ESG beyond carbon counting. Across the day, attendees heard from specialists who brought deep insight, practical experience and forward-thinking perspectives to each of these vital topics, ensuring an inspiring and thought-provoking celebration of women's expertise."

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# Accelerating sustainable homes delivery

*The new Home Performance Pathway will help accelerate the delivery of sustainable homes, says Minister for Housing*

**Home Performance Pathway is a new certification for small home builders to deliver high quality, healthy and environmentally sustainable homes, launched by the Irish Green Building Council (IGBC). It will enable SME developers to qualify for lower cost development finance, helping to accelerate the delivery of sustainable homes across the country. The Government is committed to delivering 300,000 homes by 2030 and to reducing emissions 51% by the same date.**

The new certification covers key areas of sustainability, such as carbon emissions, water efficiency, biodiversity and waste. It also covers health and comfort indicators such as indoor

air quality, acoustic comfort and summer comfort. James Browne, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, said: "Delivering Homes Building Communities commits to a range of initiatives to support small to medium construction companies to deliver sustainable housing. I am pleased to see this collaborative approach led by the IGBC with the financial and construction sectors which will enable SME developers and builders to qualify for lower cost development finance, helping to accelerate the delivery of sustainable homes across the country.

"This initiative will encourage and support the development of the Small and Medium Enterprise

homebuilder sector and further accelerate progress towards our target to deliver at least 300,000 homes by 2030."

Pat Barry, Irish Green Building Council CEO, commented: "The Home Performance Pathway provides an accessible route for smaller homebuilders to start integrating sustainability into their schemes. It encourages them to increase their ambition over time, with support from the IGBC. It will help SME builders to thrive in a future where all finance is dependent on proof of sustainability."

The Home Performance Pathway is designed as an entry level to IGBC's full sustainability certification, the

**The Government is committed to delivering 300,000 homes by 2030 and to reducing emissions 51% by the same date**



Home Performance Index (HPI). HPI is a holistic sustainability and quality standard that is well established in the market for larger housing developments in Ireland, with over 3,500 dwellings certified in 2025. The Home Performance Pathway will enable SME construction companies to access green development finance through a simplified certification pathway. SMEs are responsible for over 80% of turnover in Ireland's construction sector, and a significant portion of housing delivery.

John Delahunty, AIB Real Estate Finance, said: "AIB is dedicated to supporting the development of sustainable, energy-efficient homes throughout Ireland. The introduction of the Home Performance Pathway is a significant milestone, enabling smaller developers and builders to access affordable green finance while elevating the overall standard of housing delivery.

"This initiative provides a clearer, achievable path to sustainable

construction, accelerating the shift to a low-carbon built environment while improving sector capability and expanding access to high quality, climate-resilient homes across Ireland in support of national sustainability goals."

Brian Gaffney, Head of Residential and Development Finance at Bank of Ireland, commented: "Bank of Ireland welcomes the introduction of the Home Performance Pathway and the leadership shown by the Irish Green Building Council in making sustainable construction more accessible for SME builders. Initiatives like this play an important role in helping house builders of all sizes integrate sustainability into their developments and we are pleased to support efforts that strengthen communities and encourage the building of high-quality, energy-efficient homes across the country."

David Casey, Home Building Finance Ireland, commented: "HBFi welcomes the launch of the IGBC's Home Performance

*The Home Performance Pathway will enable SME construction companies to access green development finance through a simplified certification pathway*

Pathway noting that it encourages SME and small homebuilders to put sustainability at the heart of their developments, while delivering much needed higher quality homes to their customers."

#### **Home Performance Pathway – the facts**

- The Home Performance Pathway provides a simplified pathway for smaller home builders to qualify for green development loans, which they had previously found challenging to access. It includes indicators for environmental sustainability and occupant health and comfort
- SMEs are responsible for over 80% of turnover in Ireland's construction sector
- The Home Performance Pathway was developed by the Irish Green Building Council in conjunction with AIB, Bank of Ireland, the Construction Industry Federation, the Irish Home Builders Association, Irish Planning Institute, Ardcairn Capital, Home Building Finance Ireland and Ritterwald. The project was supported by Construct Innovate and Ardcairn Capital.

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# Price of raw materials up

The CIF's latest survey flags major concerns over impact of Iran war on construction costs

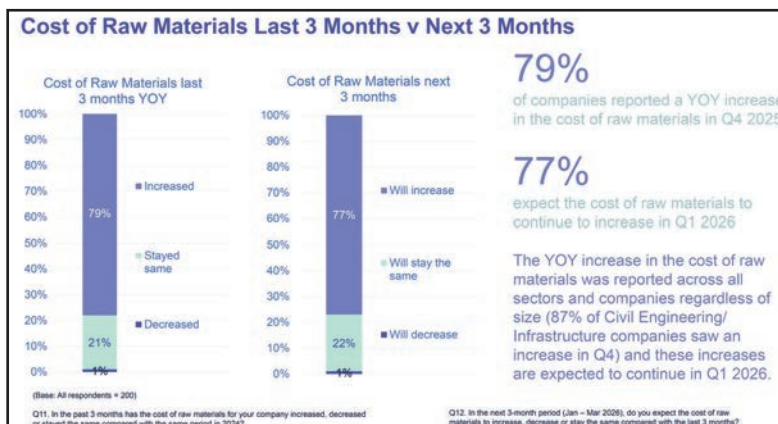
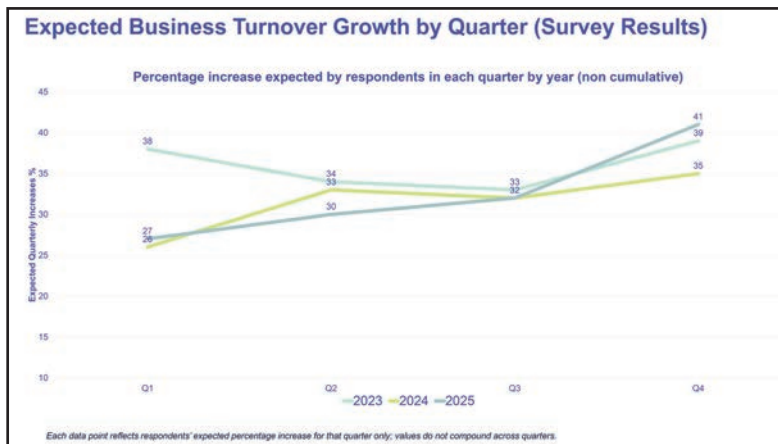
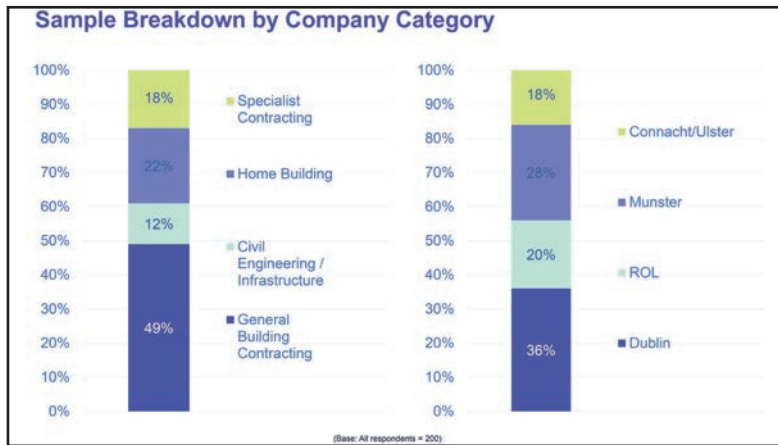
**The Construction Industry Federation (CIF) has released its Q1 2026 Construction Outlook Survey.**

The survey of 200 construction companies, carried out between 30th January and 24th February 2026, found rising costs as a concern for the industry with 79% reporting a year-on-year increase in the cost of raw materials in Q4 2025. The Federation has warned that the recent surge in oil prices following the outbreak of war in Iran could further accelerate cost increases for the industry.

While the residential and non-residential sectors continue to drive momentum, specialist contracting firms outperformed on year-on-year turnover and new order revenue in Q4 2025. The survey also reveals a deepening 'wait-and-see' approach to public projects due to administrative hurdles.

Based on responses from 200 construction companies, the survey shows:

- Residential and Non-Residential sectors dominated activity in Q4 2025 (68% and 52% respectively). Specialist Contracting outperformed on YOY turnover and new order revenue
- While General Building and Specialist Contracting expect a strong Q1, Civil Engineering faces headwinds with 43% anticipating order volume decreases. Significant YOY price increases persist, most notably among companies with €300k-€4.5m turnover
- Employment levels rose in Q4, particularly in large-scale firms (€9m+). Broad-based growth is anticipated for Q1 2026
- Exports remain a growing contributor: 50% of companies reported a YOY increase in export turnover in Q4 2025 and 58% expect export gains in Q1 2026. Around one in four larger companies (€9M+) are currently exporting
- International project demand is concentrated in data centres, pharmaceutical plants, roads and transport and healthcare
- Engagement with Public Works Contracts remains limited. 73% of companies reported no or low involvement in Q4, with 71% expecting no or low involvement in Q1 2026
- Despite this, 19% of companies expect their Public Works Contracts involvement to increase over the next 12 months. For those anticipating reduced involvement, the administrative burden, bureaucracy



*The scale and speed of the oil price spikes since the outbreak of war on 28th February are deeply alarming for the industry*

and the low margin on public works contracts are cited as the primary challenges.

Andrew Brownlee, CEO of the Construction Industry Federation, said: “As oil prices surge in the wake of the war in Iran, we are seeing renewed concern across the Irish construction industry about the volatility this is injecting into global markets and its impact on the cost of construction materials and fuel. The sector has already been operating in an environment of significant cost inflation for some time.”

In Q4 2025, 79% of firms reported year-on-year increases in raw

material costs and that was before the conflict in Iran began.

“The scale and speed of the oil price spikes since the outbreak of war on 28th February are deeply alarming for the industry. Fuel is a core driver of costs. It underpins the manufacture and transport of construction materials and is a fundamental day-to-day business cost. As a small island economy, transportation and logistics form a major component of our material costs, so shocks of this magnitude have an outsized impact on construction project viability. “Our members are seriously concerned about what these escalating fuel prices mean for

project delivery, contract management and the pipeline of work. Navigating these price shocks will require careful cost management and ongoing monitoring of supply chain pressures in the weeks ahead.

“Total capital expenditure is projected to reach €19.1 billion in 2026. While innovative strategies like Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025–2030 and the Action Plan on Accelerating Infrastructure signal strong state intent, the CIF contends that structural barriers remain. The primary constraints on delivery are not labour or skills, but rather planning delays, legal challenges, infrastructure deficits and delivery delays.

“To maintain business certainty and prevent firms from pivoting to international markets, the industry requires clear, traceable project pipelines for the €102.4 billion National Development Plan allocation (2026–2030). Throughout 2026, the CIF remains focused on driving the competitiveness and productivity needed to convert this record investment into completed projects.”

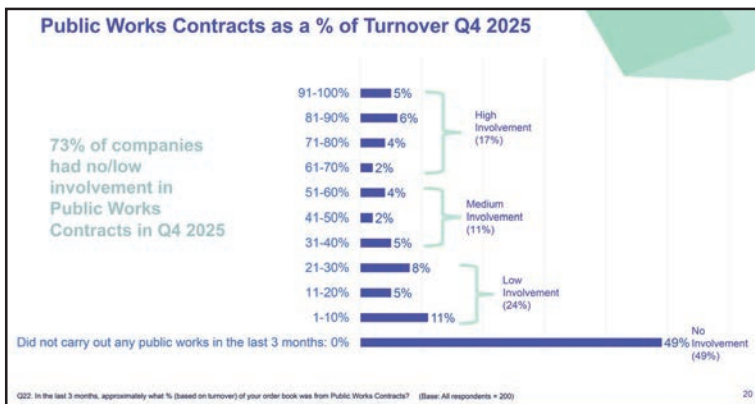
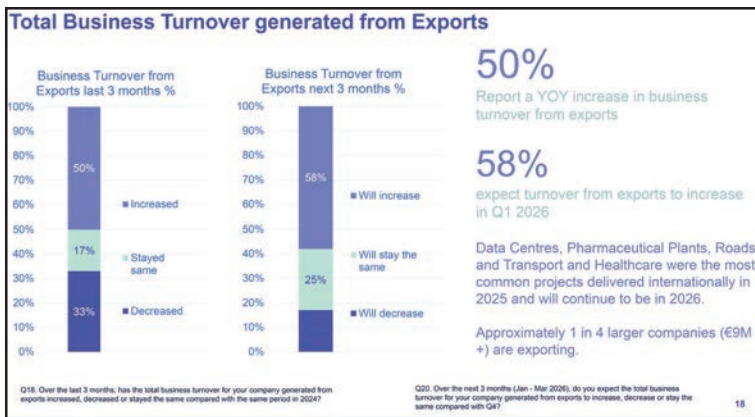
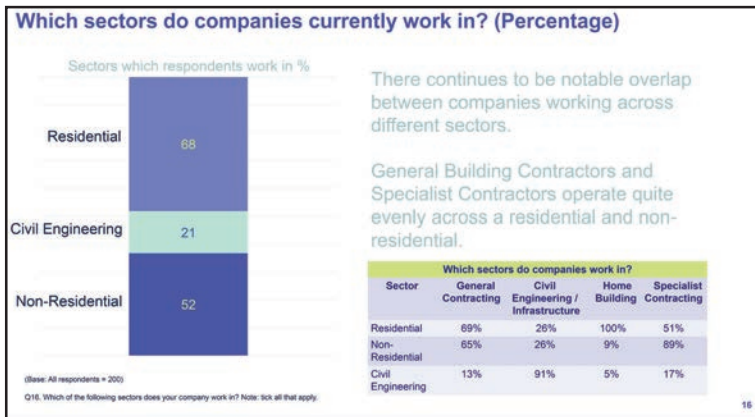
**The survey of 200 construction companies found that:**

**Business Turnover**  
41% report a YOY increase in turnover in Q4 2025  
25% anticipate turnover will increase in Q1 2026

**New Orders**  
29% report a YOY revenue increase from new orders in Q4 2025  
22% expect revenue from new orders to continue to increase into Q1 2026 with 42% expecting no change

**Employment**  
26% report a YOY increase in the total number of people they employ in Q4 2025  
23% expect to employ more staff in the coming months, with 60 per cent expecting no change

**Costs and Pricing**  
79% report a YOY increase in the cost of raw materials in Q4 2025  
77% expect the cost of raw materials to continue to increase in Q1 2026  
54% acknowledge a YOY increase in the pricing of projects  
51% expect the project pricing to increase in Q1 2026.



# Inspiring the next generation

*Sisk celebrated STEPS Engineers Week by inviting over 20 students from Mercy Secondary, Inchicore for a guided tour of Dundrum Town Centre in Dublin*

**Dundrum Town Centre was built by Sisk in 2005 and now attracts over 15 million visitors each year.** Engineers Week is an annual nationwide campaign that has been created to introduce primary and secondary school children to the diverse world of engineering. Constructed on an 18-acre site, Dundrum Town Centre includes two listed historic 400-year-old structures known as the Millpond and Millhouse which were retained and refurbished by Sisk to become the main features in the creation of one of the main public spaces of the development.

During Engineers Week, engineering is celebrated across Ireland, with primary and secondary children the target audience. The main aim of the week is to promote engineering and to show the importance of the profession to children in Ireland.

Victor O'Shea, Regional Engineer, Sisk said: "Having worked with Sisk on the Dundrum Town Centre construction over 20 years ago, I still feel immense pride every time I visit. It's a legacy project for Sisk and one that people across Ireland instantly recognise. Engineers Week is an important moment for our industry because we need to inspire

the next generation. Initiatives like this encourage students to ask questions, explore possibilities and see themselves in a future career in construction."

Don Nugent, Centre Director at Dundrum Town Centre said: "We are delighted to accommodate Sisk's initiative in welcoming the students from Mercy Secondary School to share their experience in building Ireland's premier retail, dining and leisure destination. Twenty-one years later and the building is a credit to the Sisk team that worked on the project and we are proud to have been the guardians of this impressive venue."

Damien Owens, Director General, Engineers Ireland said: "Engineers Week is a powerful opportunity to ignite curiosity in young people and show them how engineering shapes the world they experience every day. By meeting engineers, seeing real projects like Dundrum Town Centre up close and learning how our profession tackles society's biggest challenges, students can see themselves as the problem solvers and innovators of the future. We are delighted to work with partners like Sisk to help inspire the next generation of engineering talent."



## Sisk Infrastructure secures six-year National Highways framework

In other news from the company, Sisk Infrastructure has announced it has been appointed as one of three contractors for a new six-year framework to deliver a major programme of concrete road replacement on behalf of National Highways.

The new £968 million national Legacy Concrete Roads Reconstruction Framework replaces the existing concrete roads framework, where Sisk Infrastructure delivered two reconstruction schemes. This next framework continues the focus on full depth reconstruction and will be six years in duration, covering the RIS3 funding period but also overlapping with the beginning of RIS4.

Alan Rodger, Managing Director Sisk Infrastructure, said: "We're absolutely delighted that we have been awarded a position on the new Legacy Concrete Roads Renewal framework, allowing us to bring best practice and value from our experience on the previous framework. We look forward to continuing our long-standing relationship with National Highways and to working with our new framework partners and local supply chain to deliver this next programme of improvements."

Nick Knorr, Head of the National Concrete Roads Programme, said: "The national concrete roads programme is a critical long term strategic programme of renewals for National Highways, ensuring our roads are safe and reliable for drivers, maximising the benefits of this significant investment in the future of England's motorways and major A roads.

By replacing aging concrete roads with modern designs, we're ensuring smoother, quieter and more resilient routes for millions of people. Building on the success of recent reconstruction schemes, this next phase will be delivered in partnership with our supply chain, helping us bring lasting improvements to communities and businesses."

*Having worked with Sisk on the Dundrum Town Centre construction over 20 years ago, I still feel immense pride every time I visit*

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Building Expertise Through Grant's CPD Training



Keith Scully, Training Manager, Grant

As Ireland's construction sector accelerates housing delivery while adapting to stricter energy performance standards, the need for up-to-date technical expertise has never been greater. As heating technologies continue to evolve rapidly and compliance requirements become more stringent, Grant has positioned professional education as a core pillar of its industry support, helping construction professionals stay aligned with modern building standards.

Through its RIAI and Engineers Ireland approved Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme, Grant delivers free-of-charge technical training to architects, engineers, energy assessors and building professionals at its purpose-built Training Academy in Birr, Co. Offaly,

as well as through tailored one-to-one sessions with practices and construction firms across Ireland.

### CPD Courses Supporting Modern Heating Design

Grant currently offers three certified CPD courses designed to support professionals navigating changes in heating system design and specification:

1. An Introduction to Air to Water Heat Pumps, Condensing Oil & HVO-ready Boilers, and Wood Pellet Boilers
2. Condensing Oil, Wood Pellet, and Heat Pump Product Training
3. Heat Pump Technology & Appropriate Heat Emitter Sizing

Each course addresses practical considerations across specification, system design and compliance, providing participants with a clearer understanding of system efficiency,

heat emitter sizing and performance optimisation. In doing so, the sessions support professionals delivering projects in line with current NZEB and Part L requirements.

### Building Expertise through Grant's CPD Training

Beyond technical knowledge, Grant's CPD programme supports improved coordination across the construction supply chain. By giving designers, consultants and contractors greater clarity around heating system integration, the programme help reduce specification uncertainty and supports smoother project delivery.

Keith Scully, Training Manager at Grant, comments:

"At Grant, we design and manufacture highly efficient heating technologies that make a real difference, but equally important is ensuring the industry has access to clear, practical education. Our CPD sessions are developed to reflect current regulations and emerging technologies, enabling professionals to approach heating design with greater confidence and accuracy."

### Building Technical Capacity for the Years Ahead

As the construction sector continues to scale delivery while meeting evolving performance standards, access to high-quality technical training will remain essential. Grant's CPD programme provides construction professionals with the knowledge required to understand modern heating technologies, including the next generation AERONA R290 air-to-water heat pump, alongside integrated system approaches for new housing developments.

By investing in structured education and industry collaboration, Grant continues to support the development of technical expertise across Ireland's construction sector - helping ensure that heating systems are designed, specified and delivered with accuracy and long-term performance in mind. For more information to book or arrange a training session, contact [training@grant.ie](mailto:training@grant.ie) or visit [www.grant.ie/professional/training](http://www.grant.ie/professional/training).

**Think Heating. Think Grant.**  
Visit [grant.ie](http://grant.ie) for further information on Grant's innovative product range.



Grant AERONA R290 air to water air source heat pumps

*At Grant, we design and manufacture highly efficient heating technologies that make a real difference, but equally important is ensuring the industry has access to clear, practical education*

# Energy provider keeping your business in the dark?

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**Pictured (l to r): Rob Campbell, Commercial Director, Turnua; Thomas Mulligan, Director of Data Centre Infrastructure, Turnua; Gillian Daly, General Manager, Turnua; David Cox, Founder and Managing Director, Turnua; Matt Atherford, Founder, Future Academy pictured outside Turnua's Critical Infrastructure Hub, Naas, Kildare**

# Harnessing the power of AI

*Bernard McDermott, Construction Director at Turnua, chats about the role that digital skills and AI are set to play in construction and how the company's partnership with Future Academy is helping to bridge the digital skills gap in Ireland's modern workforce*

## Can you tell me about Turnua?

Turnua designs, builds and maintains critical infrastructure including data centres, fiber networks and AI-ready facilities. We're active in Ireland, the UK and the US and clients range from large multinationals to SMEs. Other services include facilities management and we're also very much involved in the end-to-end delivery of telecommunications – that side of the business is growing exponentially. Another element

of the business is focused on the construction of modular buildings, enabling companies to have their server or data centre located beside their office. We're also looking to build that side of the business. Our work enables clients to operate in the most demanding environments with confidence, knowing their infrastructure is resilient, secure and future-ready. There's a lot going on in the infrastructure space in Ireland and that's keeping us busy.

*I think the new syllabus should be focused on how we can build better, faster and off-site, which would translate into higher standards and consistency in delivery*

## Is a lack of investment in infrastructure affecting the business?

Ongoing investment is no longer an option, it's essential. We're already behind the curve when it comes to what we need to actually facilitate the future of this country. Investment may be forthcoming but I think we're missing the method in which we deliver. We seem to be very reluctant when it comes to embracing modern ways of building. By using conventional building methods, the ones we've

used for the past 50 years, we're not going to be able to deliver on the promises that have been made.

### **Why do you think there's still a reluctance to embrace MMC?**

As a country, we have viewed modular as a poor form of build. The complete opposite is true – the quality of modular build is amazing, as is its longevity. If you look at Scandinavia, 95% of its builds are modular. At around 2 or 3%, we're one of the lowest in Europe.

There's a lack of support for new businesses developing modular. There is about four or five major players in the country involved in modular, but they don't have the capacity to get ahead of demand. There's also a legacy of a generation that just prefer the block method. I think the new syllabus should be focused on how we can build better, faster and off-site, which would translate into higher standards and consistency in delivery.

### **What role can digital skills and AI play in delivering infrastructure?**

There's no end to what they can achieve. They come into play across every aspect, from planning, to design, to construction. Risks can be mitigated quickly and efficiently.

In the US, drones are being used on large construction sites to monitor health and safety. We're a little bit reluctant to lean in to that extent and I think perhaps there's an idea that AI may replace design teams, but that's just not the case. When used correctly, it will support them and make processes faster and better, while removing risk and error. That's why training is so important, in both educating people on how to deploy AI properly and showing them

its possibilities. The construction industry will still need boots on the ground to deliver projects, even when we use modern methods of build. But by using AI, those projects will be delivered more efficiently. I myself would have been quite conventional in my thinking around AI but I've seen its potential.

Recently we partnered with Future Academy, an initiative that links up with schools, businesses or industry to deliver practical AI and digital capability through real-world work, to launch the Turnua Future Academy. Through the initiative, I'm seeing what's possible.

### **What's the aim of the Turnua Future Academy?**

The aim is to develop AI and digital skills for enterprises and students alike. It's something we're all really passionate about at Turnua – equipping younger generations with the skills they need to better navigate the digital landscape. It's bringing us one step closer to bridging the digital skills gap in a modern Irish workforce. It's based at our Critical Infrastructure Hub in Naas and includes hands-on, practical camps for Transition Year students, which are going really well. The camps are giving them practical experience in digital, AI and innovation, but in a real-world infrastructure environment. Alongside the TY students, we're also delivering practical AI and digital build workshops for SMEs and enterprises, designed to help them adopt modern technologies.

### **What has the interest been like so far?**

Really encouraging. These workshops are very much focused on developing digital tools, automations and AI-powered solutions, created during hands-on workshops. First-tier businesses

*The aim is to develop AI and digital skills for enterprises and students alike*



**Bernard McDermott, Construction Director, Turnua**

are bringing us in to showcase what AI can do for them and how it can be incorporated into their operation. They're realising that deploying digital skills saves times, removes human error and really, just makes a business more efficient. When you see larger businesses embracing it, I think it's only a matter of time before smaller companies start to implement it.

### **What's next at Turnua?**

We're excited by the partnership with Future Academy and the opportunities it presents. Our growth expansion is with companies we're already working with and through word of mouth, our client list is growing all the time. In saying that, we're very much focused on sustainable growth. Our brand is our quality, first and foremost.

# Pipelife obtains EPDs for its Qual-Pex Plus+ pipe range

*Leading pipe manufacturer Pipelife Ire-land has gained Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for its Qual-Pex Plus+ 'Easy Lay' pipe range – making them the first Irish-made pipes to have independently-verified embodied carbon data*

**A high-performance, multi-purpose piping system, Qual-Pex Plus+ is engineered for reliable distribution of hot and cold water, central heating and underfloor heating, designed to last for a building's whole life** – and therefore reduce the building's whole life carbon impact. Pipelife's decision to obtain EPDs for all seven sizes of its Qual-Pex Plus+ pipe range comes as larger developers and public bodies face obligations to calculate and reduce the embodied carbon of buildings – with the rest of the industry set to follow imminently as new EU rules take hold.

Conor Manning, Managing Director of Pipelife Ireland said: "Securing EPDs for our entire Qual-Pex Plus+ pipe range reflects our commitment to supporting developers and public bodies as they work to measure and reduce the embodied carbon of buildings. It ensures that Pipelife continues to stand firmly behind our customers as embodied-carbon reporting becomes a compulsory requirement across the industry under new EU directives."

Irish Green Building Council Chief Executive Pat Barry congratulated Pipelife, saying: "It is fantastic to see leadership in Irish manufacturers reacting to the imperatives of the EPBD

and producing the data that will be needed in the coming years through production of verified EPD. It is particularly exciting to see data for components used in building services as this is one of the largest data gaps in whole life carbon assessment and we need more manufacturers to provide this data."

Policy changes such as the EU taxonomy on sustainable economic activities, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the 2024 revision of the EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings are placing pressure on building material manufacturers to produce reliable, independently-validated data on the embodied carbon of their products.

Meanwhile in September the Government's low carbon construction procurement guidelines came into effect – including a requirement to conduct whole life carbon assessments on new buildings above certain budget thresholds, based on a new Life-Cycle Global Warming Potential Calculation Methodology published by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. The requirement also applies to infrastructure projects above certain budget thresholds. To enable accurate whole life



carbon calculation, product-specific EPDs are the gold standard. The seven Qual-Pex Plus+ EPDs are published on EPD Ireland, a national platform set up by the Irish Green Building Council (IGBC) to enable Irish manufacturers to create EPDs for their products and verify them to Product Category Rules (PCR) created for Ireland. These PCRs provide specific, localized rules for various categories of construction products, enabling meaningful comparison between products on the Irish market.

The EPDs were created to EN 14508+A2 based on life cycle assessments by Dutch experts EcoReview Netherlands, and verified by third party verifier Stephen Forson, who was independently appointed by the IGBC from its panel of highly accredited EPD and LCA experts. While Qual-Pex Plus+ is made from polyethylene, a form of plastic, it has a number of environmental advantages over metal pipes.

Compared to metal pipes, it offers significantly lower embodied carbon, it is corrosion resistant and comes with a 50-year guarantee. The Qual-Pex Plus+ EPDs include a 50-year reference service life. Ireland's whole life carbon calculation methodology sets a reference study period for each building of 50 years – meaning calculations done with Qual-Pex Plus+ will therefore avoid projected emissions from replacement pipes.

***It ensures that Pipelife continues to stand firmly behind our customers as embodied-carbon reporting becomes a compulsory requirement across the industry under new EU directives***





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# Uncertain times

*Economist Jim Power's new report for Irish Steel reflects the unprecedented level of uncertainty characterising the global geo-political and trading order*

**The operating environment for the steel sector is challenging.**

The key challenges for the sector include:

- The very uncertain global economic outlook and particularly the damage to business confidence and investment intentions from the policy uncertainty being generated by the Trump administration. This is an evolving issue that changes from week to week
- Decarbonisation and particularly CBAM
- Global overcapacity and the EU import response
- Volatile energy prices and raw material prices
- Supply chain vulnerabilities, which are being exacerbated by tariffs and intense global geo-political and geo-economic uncertainty
- Continued labour market challenges, with skills shortages and upward pressure on wages a key characteristic of the labour market
- The evolution of AI and the global boom in AI investment
- The deep uncertainty about the global trading order and the

potential for a widespread and damaging trade war. Despite previous agreements, the recent Greenland-related tariff threats by President Trump highlight just how uncertain and unpredictable the future global trading environment is

- The generally elevated level of business costs.

**Price trends**

Global steel prices spiked dramatically in the second half of 2020 as global supply chain problems impacted on supply. Between August 2020 and December 2021, the producer price of steel mill products iron and steel increased by 153.3%. Between December 2021 and November 2025 prices declined by 35.2%. Steel rebar futures in January 2026 were 6.3% lower than the recent peak in July 2025. Prices are in a sideways range in recent months. Global steel production declined by 2% in the first 11 months of 2025, with Chinese output down and Indian output up by 10%. The Indian authorities are favouring Indian steel producers and the Government is planning to increase steel production by 50% by 2030.

The economic outlook for 2026 is likely to be dominated by global geo-political uncertainty and volatility, as was the case in 2025. Looking ahead to 2026, the general expectation from forecasting agencies is that global growth will



*Looking ahead to 2026, the general expectation from forecasting agencies is that global growth will be slightly weaker than 2025*



be slightly weaker than 2025, largely reflecting the impact of tariffs. It is the nature of shocks that we can rarely predict them with any degree of certainty, but based on what we know now, the key issues to watch over the coming year include:

The AI investment boom that is propelling the 'magnificent seven' stocks to new highs might run out of steam. In other words, if there was to be a re-evaluation of the return on investment in AI, this could lead to a significant correction in equity markets. Many analysts believe that AI has generated a bubble in markets, but few have any confidence about when or if it might burst. Watch this space.

The tariff threat has not gone away, as evidenced by the Greenland-related threats and the most recent threat to increase tariffs on some goods from South Korea from 15% to 25%.

Bond market volatility driven by fiscal deficits in countries such as the US, France and the UK. The bond market is the most important and influential market of all. The appointment of the next Head of the Federal Reserve in May will be interesting. A poor choice could generate considerable financial market volatility. In countries with high fiscal deficits such as France, Italy, the UK and the US, domestic politics are rendering it virtually impossible to tackle those deficits. This could generate periodic bouts of

nervousness in bond markets.

#### Other issues include:

- The relationship between China and Taiwan and the strategic importance of Taiwan as a global supplier of chips
- The Russian reaction to ongoing EU support for Ukraine
- The requirement to increase defence spending everywhere, but the EU in particular
- Growing anti-immigrant sentiment around the world. From an economic and business perspective immigration is essential for many countries, but it does complicate the provision of housing and is increasingly eliciting a negative backlash in many countries
- The relationship between the US and Venezuela and the possible implications for other Latin American countries and Greenland
- The increasing sophistication of cyber terrorism, which AI is driving
- More extreme weather events and the increasing move away from climate change policies
- There are several important elections in 2026, but the US mid-term elections on November 3rd will attract the most attention. In other countries where important elections

are being held such as Japan, Sweden, Israel, Brazil, Colombia, Hungary, and local elections in the UK, the performance of more extreme political actors will be watched with interest

- As was the case in 2025, most of the risks to the global economy in 2026 revolve around global politics. The AI bubble looks like the most significant financial/economic risk.

#### THE DOMESTIC Fiscal Vulnerabilities

At the end of 2025, the Department of Finance published a report outlining Ireland's fiscal vulnerabilities. In 2024, 88% of tax revenues flowed from VAT, income tax and corporation tax. 57% of corporation tax derived from 10 multinationals. Manufacturing accounted for one third of corporation tax and is 97.6% multinational, while ICT accounted for one fifth of corporation tax and is 99.7% multinational. Finance accounted for one seventh of corporation tax and is 84.2% multinational. The top 10% of income earners contributed 40% of income tax and 60% of USC.

Ireland has an inordinate dependence on foreign-owned companies in terms of corporation and income tax receipts. This is why what President Trump says and does really matters, why investment in all forms of infrastructure is essential and why Ireland needs to preserve its status as a good country in which to do business. That is now under considerable pressure.

#### Construction Activity

In the first three quarters of 2025, the volume of output from the construction sector increased by 13.2%. Within this overall performance, output of building (excluding civil engineering) increased by 12.4%. Output of residential declined by 2%. The

*In countries with high fiscal deficits such as France, Italy, the UK and the US, domestic politics are rendering it virtually impossible to tackle those deficits*

first quarter was very weak, but there was a strong rebound in the subsequent two quarters. Output of non-residential increased by 26.6%, while output of civil engineering increased by 16.8%.

## The Residential Market

The housing market remained strong in the first 11 months of 2025, with prices and rents continuing to rise strongly. Residential property price growth is easing in Dublin as affordability issues are impacting, while price growth remains more buoyant outside of Dublin.

### In November:

- National average residential property prices increased by 0.3% compared to the previous month and increased by 6.6% annually

- Average residential property prices outside of Dublin increased by 0.2% compared to the previous month and increased by 7.9% on an annual basis

- Average residential property prices in Dublin increased by 0.3% compared to the previous month and increased by 5% annually

- The national residential property price index in November 2025 was 23.9% above its highest level at the peak of the property boom in April 2007

- Dublin prices are 9.3% higher than their February 2007 peak and prices outside of Dublin are 26.2% above their May 2007 peak

- CSO data show that private rents increased by 2.7% in the year to December 2025

Having an adequate supply of suitable residential accommodation to buy or to rent is the most crucial element of Ireland's economic competitiveness. It is currently undermining national competitiveness as prices and rents are at very elevated levels. In the first nine months of 2025, new dwelling completions totalled 24,325, which was 13.1% ahead of



the same period in 2024.

Ireland needs to be building at least 60,000 new units every year for at least a decade to bring the market back to equilibrium. In the first nine months of 2025, planning permissions totalled 26,766 and were 4.9% ahead of the same period in 2024. In the first nine months of the year, houses accounted for 59% of total planning permissions and apartments accounted for 41%.

The failure to deliver adequate supply is attributed to several factors. These include

- Utility connection delays
- Planning delays and objections
- A shortage of zoned and serviced land
- Financing of development

The demand for housing will strengthen as the population continues to expand and demand backlog continues to build up.

### Input costs for the construction sector

Input costs for the construction sector have stabilised over the

past couple of years. However, in November 2025, wholesale cement prices were 64% higher than January 2021; wholesale prices for structural steel were 93.8% higher; and wholesale prices for Structural Steel & Fabricated Metal were 102.3% higher.

### Long-term Outlook

Taken together, sustainability reporting requirements, Scope 1–2–3 GHG accounting and CBAM represent a structural shift in how carbon is measured, priced and managed in the steel value chain. For Ireland, as a small, import-dependent economy with no domestic primary steelmaking capacity, these changes present particular risks. However, they also create opportunities for:

- Early investment in emissions data capability
- Strategic supplier engagement
- Carbon-informed procurement

The ability of the Irish steel sector to adapt to this evolving framework will be a key determinant of its long-term competitiveness, resilience and role in the low-carbon transition.

***Ireland needs to be building at least 60,000 new units every year for at least a decade to bring the market back to equilibrium***

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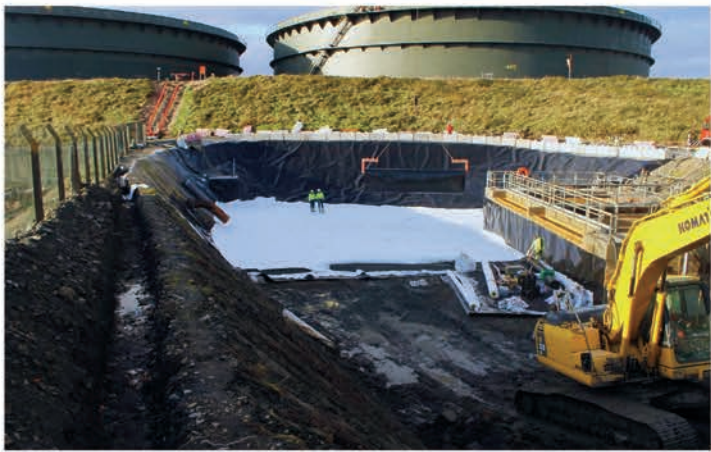
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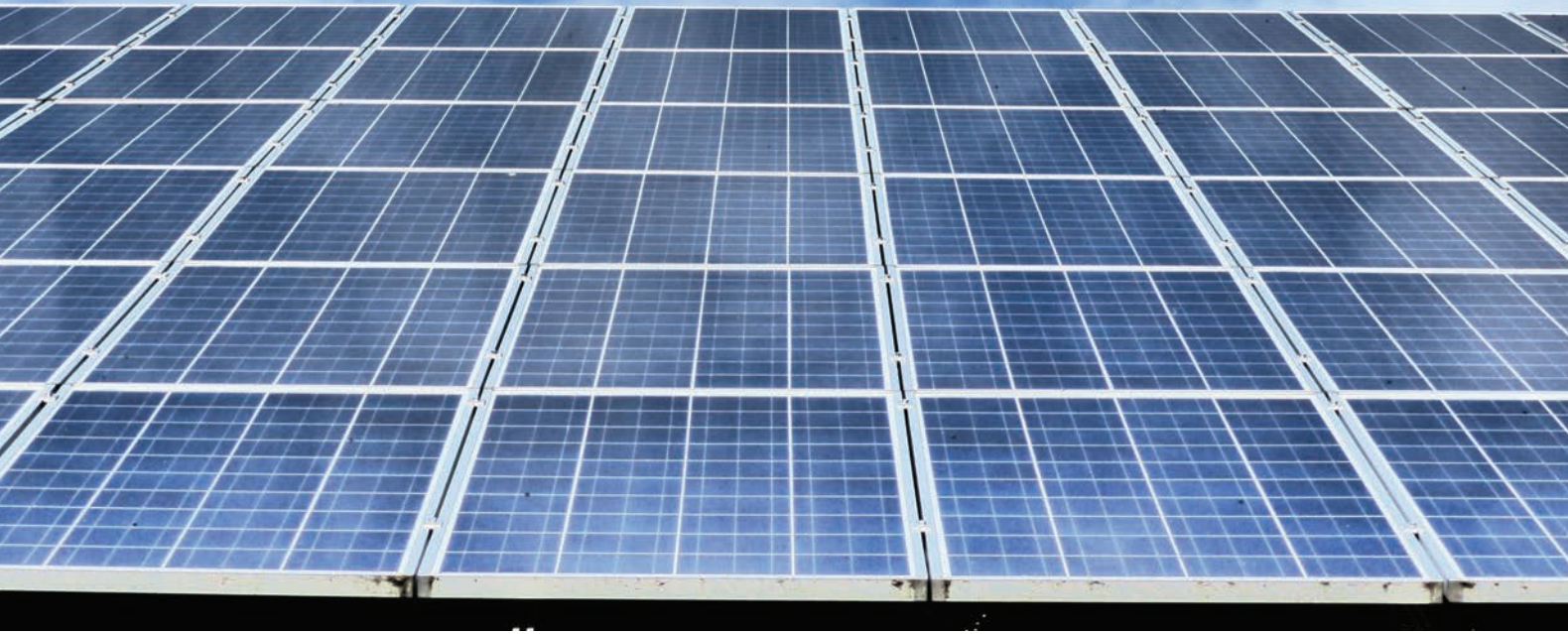
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## The Green Scene

*A look at what's happening on the sustainability side of Ireland's construction industry*

### SEAI ANNOUNCES €20.5M IN GOV FUNDING FOR 34 ENERGY RESEARCH AWARDS

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has awarded more than €20 million in Government funding to 34 new national energy research awards under the SEAI National Energy Funding Programme in 2025. This comprises 25 Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) projects and nine Energise Fellowships. Funding for these awards is provided by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

The RD&D projects funded by SEAI span small, medium and large-scale initiatives across critical energy areas including offshore wind, bioenergy, district heating, green hydrogen, sustainable

transport, forecasting, smart buildings, carbon capture and environmental and climate targets. The Energise Fellowships Programme supports early-career and mid-career researchers, building national research capacity, strengthening the Irish energy research ecosystem, bridging the research to policy gap and accelerating the development of future research leaders. The 2025 Energise Fellowships are supporting research across areas including energy poverty alleviation, offshore renewable energy, carbon capture, energy efficient buildings, biofuels and green hydrogen.

In 2025, SEAI collaborated with three co-funding partners in the RD&D call, each supporting strategically important research themes:

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine – co-funding research on sustainable feedstocks for anaerobic digestion
- Climate Change Advisory Council – co-funding the development of low-emission and equitable transport strategies
- Met Éireann – co-funding a project on renewable energy forecasting in Ireland's changing climate.

William Walsh, CEO at SEAI, said: "These projects have the potential to transform Ireland's energy system. From floating wind to using AI to enhance the efficiency of renewables, this research is on the cutting-edge of technology and international best practice. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels will mean a cleaner, healthier, more resilient and competitive future for our country. It will reduce our energy bills and put our country on a more

*Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels will mean a cleaner, healthier, more resilient and competitive future for our country*

secure footing. At SEAI, we fund the research that will make that vision a reality. Congratulations to the teams awarded this funding and thank you for the significant contribution you have made, and are making, to Ireland's energy transition."

### **KINGSPAN DELIVERS 2.8M TONNE EMISSIONS REDUCTION SINCE 2020**

Kingspan has reached the midpoint of its 2030 Planet Passionate targets, reporting a reduction of more than 2.8 million tonnes of CO2 since 2020 – equivalent to over 7 million return flights between Ireland and France. Launched in 2020, the global programme, Planet Passionate, sets clear targets across four focus areas – carbon, energy, circularity and water to further support the transition to a net zero emissions built environment. The company's sixth annual report details the progress delivered across its global operations, supply chain and partnerships to date.

Key achievements highlighted in the 2025 report include:

- 1.05 million tonnes of recycled and renewable raw materials used in 2025 – approximately the weight of 584,415 cars
- Over 5 billion PET bottles utilised in manufacturing processes since 2020
- 245 million litres of rainwater harvested since 2020 – equivalent to filling 1.63 million baths
- More than 600 environmental sustainability projects delivered globally since 2020, including 180 completed in 2025.

As part of the continued decarbonisation of its existing



operations, renewable energy now accounts for 63% of total energy use across the Group, with 61% of wholly owned sites equipped with solar PV systems.

In parallel, Kingspan increased procurement of lower embodied carbon materials by 30% year-on-year in 2025, supporting the expansion of its Lower Embodied Carbon (LEC) product portfolio, which now comprises 35 solutions across multiple product categories. Progress also continued across the company's supply chain decarbonisation journey. During the year, Kingspan signed four memoranda of understanding with lower embodied carbon steel suppliers across Europe, Asia and the Middle East, supporting the future availability of lower-carbon steel.

Beyond its own operations, 2025 saw Kingspan strengthen long-term strategic partnerships that expand the reach of Planet Passionate worldwide. Working

with organisations such as Big Life Foundation and Seven Clean Seas, Kingspan continues to support multi-year initiatives that protect critical ecosystems and strengthen communities.

Commenting on the milestone, Holly Loughman, Head of Sustainability at Kingspan Group, said: "Reaching the halfway point of Planet Passionate allows us to reflect on the scale of progress achieved across our business. The reduction in GHG emissions across our value chain, the growth in renewable energy and the expansion of lower embodied carbon products demonstrate what can be achieved when ambitious targets are combined with innovation and collaboration.

"While we are delighted with the progress to date, our focus remains firmly on the work ahead. Planet Passionate is a long-term commitment that supports our mission to accelerate a net zero

**Launched in 2020, the global programme sets clear targets across four focus areas - carbon, energy, circularity and water, to further support the transition to a net zero emissions built environment**



emissions built environment, with people and planet at its heart.”

## **GALWAY CITY CO SECURES EU GRANT TO DELIVER WATERWAY PROJECT**

Galway City Council has become the first local authority in Ireland to receive funding under the European Urban Initiative (EUI) – Innovative Actions programme. The Council has been awarded €3,363,213 through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to lead a pioneering project called WATERWAY, which will revitalise the city’s historic canals as a source of clean energy, education and public engagement.

The total project value is estimated to be €4.2 million and reflects Galway’s growing leadership in local climate innovation. WATERWAY is fully aligned with the Galway City Climate Action Plan and Ireland’s national targets under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts.

WATERWAY will see the installation of three small-scale hydropower turbines at selected sites, bringing the canals that once powered the city’s mills and industries back to life. The proposed locations currently being reviewed are the Mill Street Canal, Terryland Waterworks and the Mclaughlin Building, Nuns Island.

The locations will undergo detailed design to finalise appropriate design considerations. Some of the locations being considered already contain existing infrastructure such as turbines, sluices and culverts, allowing for modern energy production with minimal disruption to sites. These turbines will harness the natural flow of the canals to generate electricity for public use, including powering buildings and EV charging, while also delivering clean, renewable energy back to the electrical grid. The micro hydropower initiative is safe for wildlife above and below

*The proposed locations currently being reviewed are the Mill Street Canal, Terryland Waterworks and the Mclaughlin Building, Nuns Island*

the water. This project involves the modernisation of existing systems and adheres to the published guidelines in Ireland and the EU. Authorised ed smolt screens are used to prevent fish from entering, who can pass downstream as normal through a free-flowing passage, avoiding any disruption to fish migration patterns. No equipment will be installed in the main Corrib river and the project will focus on the city’s purpose-built existing industrial canals.

This announcement comes after the SEAI highlighted the urgent need for faster action to meet climate goals. WATERWAY responds to that challenge by offering a scalable model for energy transition in Irish cities. Derek Pender, Director of Service, Galway City Council said, “This initiative represents a significant step forward in Galway’s commitment to sustainability and innovation. Once operational, the Galway City project will serve as a demonstration site for other local authorities across Ireland and the EU, showing how underused water infrastructure can be reimagined to deliver positive environmental, economic and social impacts.”

The first turbine installation is expected in late 2026, following feasibility studies, environmental assessments and community engagement. The remaining two installations will be publicly procured to appoint a contractor later in the project lifecycle, with all systems scheduled to be operational by the end of the project in early 2029.

The University of Galway is currently developing new modules and training opportunities in renewable energy and hydropower as part of the WATERWAY project. These are expected to launch in late 2026, with pilot programmes and short courses offered initially, followed by integration into formal academic programmes in the following years.



# A milestone for modular in Ireland

*Actavo has won 'Modular Buildings Project of the Year' at the Irish Building and Design Awards 2026*

**Actavo Modular has won the 'Modular Buildings Project of the Year' at the Irish Building and Design Awards 2026 for its Hollywoodrath Primary School project.** Located in Hollystown, Dublin 15, this is Ireland's largest enhanced modular school building.

The award acknowledges the scale, innovation and delivery excellence achieved on this landmark project, which was completed in 2025. Spanning 4,223 sq m and constructed in just 15 months, it sets new standards in Modern Methods of Construction (MMC).

Actavo Modular was contracted by the Department of Education and Youth under the Department's enhanced modular buildings programme. Hollywoodrath Primary School is a state-of-the-art, two-storey building with 24 classrooms, a two-classroom special educational needs unit, external hard and soft play areas and two ballcourts. Designed with innovative materials, the building achieves optimum energy efficiency, flexible interconnectivity and structural integrity.

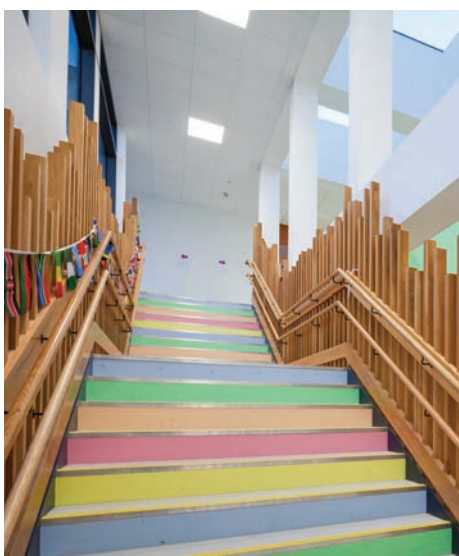
Actavo Modular provided a comprehensive turn-key service, including design, fabrication, installation, civil works and landscaping. The company worked in close collaboration with its client, the Department of Education and Youth, AFEC International, McCrae Consulting Engineers and Renaissance Engineering, to ensure the smooth execution of this project.

Nigel Tighe, Managing Director, Actavo Modular said: "We are honoured to receive this award for a project that marks such an important milestone for the modular construction sector in Ireland. Hollywoodrath is a true demonstration of the speed, quality and efficiency that Modern Methods of Construction can deliver at scale. This achievement is down to the dedication of our team, our partners and our close collaboration with the Department of Education and Youth."

Fabrication of the 152 modules was completed at Actavo's manufacturing facility in Kill, Co. Kildare, while civil and enabling works progressed on-site. Off-

site fabrication of the buildings while on-site works were underway is one of the significant advantages of modular construction, delivering both time and cost-savings to the client. Each module arrived on site 90% complete. The heaviest module weighed 36 tonnes, believed to be an industry record. Modular buildings are proving to be an ideal approach to a quick, reliable and high-quality solution. Issues generally associated with traditional build approaches, such as regular site access, large labour force on-site, noise disruption and lengthy completion timelines, are greatly reduced using a modular approach. Buildings are completed in full compliance with the building regulations and come with a standard 60-year structural warranty.

The Irish Building and Design Awards celebrate excellence, innovation and achievement across Ireland's construction, architectural and engineering sectors. Recognising outstanding projects and the teams behind them, the awards highlight best-in-class design, sustainability and delivery across the built environment.



# Supporting the delivery of new homes

*Grafton Group's acquisition of Cygnum will complement Chadwicks' trade portfolio and support faster, more efficient delivery of new homes*

**Grafton Group plc, the European multinational distributor of construction-related products and solutions**, has entered into an agreement to acquire the entire issued share capital of Cygnum Holdings Limited, subject to approval.

Founded in 1997 and based in Macroom, Co. Cork, Cygnum is a leading made-to-order supplier of offsite timber frame solutions to developers and contractors in the Irish market. Cygnum's unaudited 2025 revenue and adjusted operating profit were €45.6 million and €7.9 million respectively. The consideration is undisclosed but reflects a valuation in line with market precedents. The transaction is expected to be earnings-enhancing in its first full financial year following acquisition and to deliver an attractive return on invested capital. The existing management team will remain with the business and are incentivised to grow profitability subject to certain performance conditions.

Modular construction is one of the fastest growing building methods in the new homes market in Ireland. According to the Irish Timber Frame Manufacturers' Association (ITFMA), the proportion of timber frame solutions used in low-rise housing schemes was 37% in 2019, while data from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage indicates that in the second half of 2025, 61% of homes in scheme developments had notified the intention to use timber frame construction. Sustained growth has been fuelled by the cost, quality and delivery efficiencies of timber frame, a trend that is expected to continue over the next decade as Ireland seeks to address a structural housing shortage. With just over 36,000 homes completed in Ireland in 2025 and a Government target of 60,000 homes to be completed annually by 2030, Cygnum is an exciting addition to Grafton's portfolio in the island of Ireland segment.

Grafton intends to operate Cygnum as part of Chadwicks Group, its distribution business in the Republic of Ireland. This acquisition aligns with Chadwicks Group's strategy to extend its offering and acquire adjacent competencies and also allows it to continue to be a one-stop shop for customers as they adopt modern methods of construction.

Commenting on the acquisition, Eric Born, CEO of Grafton Group plc, said: "We are very pleased to have agreed to acquire Cygnum which is a well-established business with a strong and experienced management team. This acquisition strongly complements Chadwicks Group's trade portfolio and supports the faster, more efficient delivery of new homes to help address Ireland's structural housing shortage. For Grafton, it provides an opportunity to increase our exposure to the new-build market and to support Cygnum customers with access to a broader range of construction related products and solutions."

## **Grafton Group invests in growing Iberian HVAC market**

Grafton Group plc also recently announced that it has entered into an agreement to acquire the entire issued share capital of Componentes Eléctricos Mercialuz, S.A., Mercialuz Hogar, S.L.U., EAS Electric Smart Technology, S.L.U. and Mercialuz Canarias, S.L.U. Mercialuz is a family-owned Spanish group founded in 1986 and headquartered in the province of Alicante on the Iberian Peninsula. It is predominantly a distributor of domestic and commercial air conditioning equipment to professional SME installers, with c.10,500 customers in 2025. Almost three quarters of sales in 2025 were from own brands, primarily the fast-growing Johnson brand, over which Mercialuz owns the European rights. Approximately 70% of sales are aimed at the professional installer market, either direct or through resellers, with the remainder of sales from appliances and white goods which are almost exclusively sold to wholesalers, resellers and developers.

Mercialuz achieved strong growth in 2025, reporting unaudited revenue of €150.4 million and unaudited adjusted operating profit of €22.2 million. The total consideration is a maximum of €175 million but anticipated to be approximately €165 million on a cash and debt free basis, which will be determined following completion of the statutory audited results. The existing management team will remain in place, supported by a team of over 330 employees across 18 locations in Spain.

With growth of 2.6% in 2025, Spain was amongst the best performing economies



**Eric Born, Chief Executive Officer, Grafton Group plc**

in Europe last year. The construction sector is expected to grow by 3-4% in 2026, with the HVAC sector amongst the fastest growing categories.

The acquisition of Mercialuz represents an important step forward in Grafton's strategy to consolidate and grow its presence in the fragmented Iberian distribution market for construction-related products and solutions following the acquisition of Salvador Escoda in October 2024. Both businesses operate in the fast-growing HVAC segment and will benefit from purchasing synergies. Each business will continue to operate independently to maximise the growth potential inherent in their different but complementary business models.

Mercialuz operates on a direct-to-site delivery model with no branch network, instead using regional delivery hubs to efficiently serve its customer base with a focused product range (c.9,000 SKUs). In contrast, Salvador Escoda operates a branch-based model with 95 branches supplemented by direct deliveries to sites and a capacity to draw on over 140,000 SKUs across its product range. The acquisition of Mercialuz is expected to be earnings enhancing in its first full financial year following acquisition and to deliver an attractive return on invested capital over the medium term. Grafton intends to support Mercialuz in its brand development and ongoing organic expansion in the fragmented Iberian marketplace.

Eric Born, CEO of Grafton Group plc, said: "We are very pleased at the prospect of welcoming this scalable family business and its quality management team into Grafton's growing presence in Iberia. Mercialuz has all the characteristics we are seeking in an acquisition; from the growth segment and markets it serves to its scalability and reputation in the trade. Subject to regulatory approval, it will further cement our position in the fast-growing Iberian HVAC market with combined annualised sales of some €400m and is a further step in our ambition to build a significant business distributing construction-related products and solutions in Iberia."

**Modular construction is one of the fastest growing building methods in the new homes market in Ireland**

# Fourth intake for Kirby college bursary scheme

*The Irish firm is continuing its drive to promote gender diversity in the engineering sector*



**Kirby Group Engineering has announced the recipients of its third-level bursary awards for this year**, as part of the company's ongoing drive to promote diversity and inclusion in the engineering sector. Six female students have been selected this year, as the programme goes from strength to strength.

Kirby is a family-founded firm based in Limerick and has operations across Ireland, the UK, mainland Europe, the Nordics and South Africa. It employs over 1,900 people and provides full mechanical and electrical contracting services as well as specialist high-voltage (HV) and medium-voltage (MV) design and construction services. Its clients include a number of global IT leaders and range across different sectors including data centres, life sciences, industrial and power and renewables.

Now in its fourth year, Kirby's bursary programme is open to women studying Electrical, Mechanical, or Building Services Engineering at third level institutions across Ireland and South Africa. Having come through a rigorous selection process conducted by Kirby's Talent Acquisition team, the six recipients will receive:

- A full scholarship to cover the coming academic year
- Paid professional placements on Kirby's local and international projects
- Mentorship from senior engineers
- Opportunities to gain highly valuable industry insights

This year's winning students are Aisling Costelloe from Ennis, Co Clare; Meadhbh Hurley from Limerick; Caoimhe Flynn from Kilcolgan, Co Galway; Emilia Hildebrandt from Tipperary; Sarah Coyle from Belmullet, Co Mayo; and Emma Prestage from Cape Town, South Africa.

Meadhbh Hurley is a student at University of Galway. She says she's delighted to have been selected: "Kirby's recognition of me as a deserving candidate for this bursary has reinforced my belief in myself as a developing electrical engineer and will bolster my confidence through my future professional development." Caoimhe Flynn, who is also studying at University of Galway, has been speaking about her hopes for the bursary: "I will gain significant experience through work placements and mentorship, which will greatly aid my studies while allowing me to expand my networks and meet other like-minded women in the field of engineering."

Emma Prestage, who is from Cape Town and a student at Stellenbosch University says an opportunity like this bursary can be a very important career boost: "For a student, the hardest part is often getting the 'first foothold' of real experience. Knowing that Kirby is investing in my development and that there will be chances to learn on real projects and from experienced engineers is incredibly valuable."

Sarah Coyle is studying at Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Galway. She says diversity in the

industry is crucial: "It is important to me that women are visible in the engineering industry, as their presence inspires the next generation, including myself, to pursue careers in engineering with confidence and ambition." Emilia Hildebrandt is a student at University of Limerick. She expects that having the bursary's support will help her spread the word that engineering is for everyone: "It would also allow me to dedicate more time to projects and events to share that knowledge and to encourage fellow students and younger students in pursuing engineering. I have always been someone who loves to get involved and I'm very thankful that this bursary gives me the opportunity to be able to now spend more time giving back to my community in the year ahead."

Aisling Costelloe, another Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Galway student, says she sees potential for working with Kirby well into the future: "I hope to join a graduate programme with Kirby, which I believe would open the door to incredible opportunities. With Kirby's global presence and its strong foundation in Ireland, I would have the chance to work on engineering projects around the world, contributing to solutions that improve the world we live in."

Electrical Engineering Manager at Kirby, Amy Lane, is among the leaders supporting the students. She says the scheme has become a valued part of Kirby's structure: "I'm thrilled to say we are entering the fourth year of our third-level bursary programme. It has been a pleasure to meet and work with many highly talented and motivated students and this year's intake is no different. Programmes like this one are vital to the future of engineering, one in which diversity is the norm and Kirby will continue to champion that cause, as a people-first organisation."

Kirby's Chief Operations Officer, John Grogan, believes the bursary programme is an extremely worthwhile investment: "Initiatives such as this play an important role in demonstrating the benefits of careers in engineering and construction and more importantly, ensuring those messages reach as wide an audience as possible. The bursary programme is a symbol of Kirby's commitment to promoting diversity and above all, our identity as a people first organisation."

# Tenderbids are (not) go!

*Aidan Kirrane and Lisa Boyd at Eversheds Sutherland look at why the Tenderbids decision is the death knell for smash and grab adjudications in Ireland*

## 1. Why is this case in the news?

The validity of smash and grab adjudications under CCA 2013 had been debated since the Act came into force in 2016. In *Tenderbids* the High Court settled the issue by:

- Refusing to uphold the adjudicator's decision under CCA 2013 which had been awarded in favour of the Applicant on a smash and grab basis; and
- Confirming that smash and grab adjudications are not provided for under CCA 2013.

## 2. What is a smash and grab adjudication?

A "smash and grab" adjudication occurs when:

- A party seeking payment under a construction contract issues a Payment Claim Notice and the paying / responding party fails to reply within the relevant time period; and
- An adjudication is commenced, based on the argument that the default in reply is sufficient to entitle the party seeking payment to the full amount claimed.

As a result, a "true value" adjudication does not take place and the referring party's entitlement to payment arises automatically notwithstanding the merits of the underlying claim.

## 3. Why is the *Tenderbids* decision so important?

Smash and grab adjudications are well-established in the UK. Opinion has been divided in Ireland as to whether the practice was provided for under CCA 2013. The two competing schools of thought on the matter were:

- That smash and grab adjudications gave effect to the purpose of the legislation which was to provide a pay now, argue later system of dispute resolution; and
- That CCA 2013 did not intend to provide for smash and grab adjudications and were contrary to the principles of fair procedures. The decision in *Tenderbids* clarifies that smash and grab adjudications are not provided for under CCA 2013 and that adjudications in Ireland will have to be based on the underlying merits of the claim. The court was

clear that court intervention at the enforcement stage of an adjudication award will only occur in exceptional circumstances.

## 4. It has been nearly 10 years since the commencement of CCA 2013. Why are the courts only clarifying this issue now?

As in any other area, a suitable set of facts and issues must be presented before a court in order for a point of law to be adjudicated. Although the topic of smash and grab adjudications in Ireland has been considered and debated at length in the industry, an appropriate opportunity for judicial clarification did not arise until *Tenderbids*. Indeed, the court in *Tenderbids* noted that the prevailing need for clarity on the issue of whether smash and grab adjudications were permitted, constituted exceptional circumstances on the facts to allow the Respondent to raise this point as a new issue at the enforcement stage notwithstanding this issue was not raised at the adjudication between the parties.

## 5. Will this affect all adjudications?

In short, yes – unless there is legislative amendment to CCA 2013 and / or *Tenderbids* is overturned, smash and grab adjudications or attempted smash and grab adjudications will not form part of the construction dispute resolution landscape in Ireland.

## 6. Can Payment Claim Notices just be ignored now?

No – while it appears that this decision is the death knell for smash and grab adjudications in Ireland, it does not provide carte blanche for paying / respondent parties to ignore Payment Claim Notices and / or avoid participating in adjudications. While *Tenderbids* could be said to have diluted the impact of CCA 2013 to an extent, parties still cannot contract out of adjudication. *Tenderbids* will reaffirm the use of a merits based model where referring parties will have to substantiate their claims notwithstanding the failure of a paying / respondent party to reply to the Payment Claim Notice and / or

participate in the adjudication. Similarly, adjudicators will have to show that they have engaged with the referral presented by a referring party, give reasons for their decision and note that their decision has been formulated on the submissions presented and not on the failure of a party to reply to a Payment Claim Notice.

## 7. Does this mean that the UK is no longer a source of guidance?

No – the body of case law on payment claim disputes in the UK is still far more substantial than that in Ireland and remains an instructive source of information for construction industry practitioners and lawyers alike. Nonetheless, as demonstrated by the *Tenderbids* decision, it is important to exercise caution when relying on UK decisions, as the UK and Irish systems, while similar, are not identical and as CCA 2013 enters its teenage years and continues to establish its own identity, the two systems may move further apart.

**Aidan Kirrane is Of Counsel within the Dispute Resolution & Litigation team at Eversheds Sutherland and Lisa Boyd is a Partner in the procurement and tendering team at Eversheds Sutherland**



**Aidan Kirrane**



**Lisa Boyd**

*Although the topic of smash and grab adjudications in Ireland has been considered and debated at length in the industry, an appropriate opportunity for judicial clarification did not arise until *Tenderbids**

## SPECIFIER

# THE GUARANTEED IRISH FOREST AT INISTIOGE, CO. KILKENNY IS THRIVING

Last year, thousands of saplings of native Irish species including oak, birch, hazel and ash were planted to establish the Guaranteed Irish Forest woodland on a 12 hectare site at Inistioge, Co Kilkenny. As one of the supporters of the initiative, Wavin was delighted to see that the saplings are thriving, despite the appalling weather this winter, and that many have shown notable growth. The distinct shapes of leaves - such as the recognisable lobes of young oak are now clearly visible.

In time, the forest which is part of a wider commitment to encourage climate action engagement and increase biodiversity, will be open to local communities to enjoy – a new green space, that benefits both mental and physical health.



Native trees like Oak, Birch, and Holly are vital to Ireland's ecosystem. Oaks alone can support over 2,300 species, including birds, insects, and fungi. Holly provides food and shelter for birds during the winter, while Birch improves soil health and absorbs carbon dioxide, helping combat

climate change and enabling other species to thrive. Planting native trees not only restores Ireland's natural woodlands but also contributes to carbon. Sustainability is at the core of Wavin's purpose, which as part of the Orbia Group, is committed to advancing life around the world. An initiative like the Guaranteed Irish Forest shows clear intention to put purpose into action with the creation of an amenity that will be there for generations to come.

The woodland is managed by An Taisce, the National Trust for Ireland, with a focus on climate, nature, and people.

[www.wavin.ie](http://www.wavin.ie)

## JONES ENGINEERING MARKS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Jones Engineering marked International Women's Day 2026 with a series of company-wide initiatives celebrating progress in female representation, alongside its participation in ESB Science Blast at the RDS, Dublin, where the company was honoured to welcome President of Ireland, Catherine Connolly, to its exhibition stand.

As International Women's Day shines a spotlight on progress and opportunity, Jones Engineering is celebrating continued growth in female participation across its workforce well above the current industry average, with a clear ambition to increase this further

Increasing female participation in engineering and construction remains a strategic priority for the company. Through sustained investment in graduate, internship and apprenticeship programmes, and by supporting national initiatives such as I Wish, TU Dublin's TrailblazHER Programme, Science Blast and CIF Women in Construction, Jones Engineering continues to actively champion inclusion across the sector.

Chief People Officer Carmel Walsh said: "Encouraging more women to pursue careers in STEM is not just about achieving gender balance, it's about fostering innovation, strengthening teams, and driving progress in a rapidly evolving industry. International Women's Day provides an important opportunity to reflect on how far we've come and to reaffirm our commitment to building a more inclusive engineering sector for the future."



### International Women's Day at Jones Engineering

This year's global theme, Give to Gain, resonated strongly across the organisation. To mark the occasion, Jones Engineering hosted an internal webinar with Formula 1 strategist and broadcaster Bernie Collins, who shared insights into resilience, high-performance decision-making and navigating a traditionally male-dominated industry. In place of internal gifts or events, the company also made a corporate donation to Women's Aid, supporting its vital work protecting women and children affected by domestic abuse. Alongside these activities, Jones Engineering continues to engage students at an early stage through outreach initiatives. Transition Year work experience placements are now evenly balanced between male and female students, helping to normalise engineering as a career path for young women from the outset.

### Inspiring the Next Generation at Science Blast 2026

Jones Engineering was proud to once again host an interactive stand at ESB Science Blast, a national STEM event designed to foster curiosity and innovation among primary school students.

During the event, the company welcomed President of Ireland, Catherine Connolly, to its stand. The President met with Jones apprentices and engineers, observed student activities, and was impressed by the interactive demonstrations showcasing how engineering innovation is shaping Ireland's future.

Students visiting the stand engaged in hands-on engineering challenges and demonstrations designed to demystify the profession and showcase real-world applications of mechanical and electrical engineering. By meeting engineers and apprentices directly, students gained practical insight into the diverse and rewarding career pathways available. By combining structured internal supports, national partnerships, and early engagement through initiatives like Science Blast and Transition Year placements, Jones Engineering is working to ensure that more young women see engineering as a viable, exciting and future-focused career.

On this International Women's Day, Jones Engineering reaffirms its commitment to creating pathways where women can enter, grow and lead within engineering and construction.

[www.joneseng.com](http://www.joneseng.com)

## ST STEPHENS GREEN HOTEL, DUBLIN, IRELAND

### THE PROJECT

St Stephens Green Hotel is located in the heart of Dublin 2, a busy urban environment with a mix of historic and modern developments. The project, delivered by Townlink as both customer and main contractor, required specialist basement construction supported by Baridek. The works involved installing an effective below-ground waterproofing solution using PREPRUFE® 120S, a high performance membrane system.

### THE CHALLENGE

The project faced several significant constraints, beginning with challenging ground conditions caused by a high water table, which demanded a robust below ground protection strategy. In addition to this, the structure required both water and gas protection to ensure long term safety and viability for its intended use as a habitable space.

The contractor also needed a solution that could deliver high performance while staying within tight budget parameters, making cost effectiveness a key consideration. Speed and flexibility of installation were equally critical due to the confined city centre location and strict programme pressures. Furthermore, the team had to maintain high performance standards while minimising disruption in a busy city centre district, where operational continuity and public accessibility were essential. Selecting the right waterproofing system was therefore crucial to ensuring long

term protection, durability, and overall project viability.

### THE SOLUTION

GCP's technical support and relationship with Townlink and Baridek played a central role in the selection process. Both the main contractor and specialist contractor had confidence in GCP due to previous successful collaborations and the consistent technical expertise demonstrated across earlier projects. This trust, combined with GCP's proven track record in delivering reliable below ground protection systems, led to PREPRUFE® 120S being chosen as the preferred solution.

To address the project requirements, PREPRUFE® 120S was chosen to deliver robust waterproofing and gas protection while staying within the required budget. Its strong performance characteristics—including durability, reliability, and suitability for confined site conditions—aligned closely with the contractor's technical and commercial expectations. In addition, the membrane's ease and speed of application supported the fast paced programme, allowing the installation to progress efficiently despite the constraints of a city centre site.

The implemented solution delivered a high performance yet cost effective system that met the contractor's key criteria. It provided dependable protection against both water ingress and gas penetration in

the challenging basement conditions, ensuring the long term integrity of the structure. The installation process ran smoothly, with positive feedback from the project team, who reported satisfaction with both the product's application and overall performance.

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Aerial view of the construction site, with application of PREPRUFE® 120S



Rebar installed against the PREPRUFE® 120S membrane

## WAVIN SEWER'S COMPLIANCE AND LASTING GUARANTEES MAKE THEM TOP CHOICE AT RIVERWOOD

Munster Construction is currently on site on Riverwood, a new housing development in Thurles, Co. Tipperary. The development consists of 127 homes and is a mix of duplexes, two, three and four bedroom homes. Site Manager Peadar O'Toole worked with Wavin Technical Representative Patrick Corrigan to select Wavin's Sewer range on the development. Products used include WAJ's, Wavin Tegra 600 and Wavin Sewer. Speaking about his choice, Peadar said, "I decided early on in the project to use the Wavin Sewer range and on consultation with our Wavin representative we made our selection and then worked with Uisce Éireann's engineers for approval. We've been happy with the products themselves, which we knew would be Uisce Éireann compliant, and the ease of installation.

Wavin has been on hand with any technical help we've needed and overall, the whole process has been very straightforward."

Taking a closer look at the products used shows how efficiency on site, ease of installation and peace of mind that comes from product reliability and quality are key influencing factors:

### Newly Launched - Tegra 600

Wavin has built on 40 years of inspection



chamber expertise with an enhanced Tegra 600 range. Certified to EN13598-2 and compliant with Irish Building Regulations Part H and Uisce Éireann requirements, the updated system offers a specification-ready, long-lasting solution for wastewater projects.

The range now includes seven flow profiles and 27 base variants, supporting 110mm to 315mm connections to give installers greater flexibility across varied site conditions. Key upgrades include a patented ball-socket design offering 10° movement in all directions, improving tolerance for on-site misalignment and a chamfered, easy push-fit shaft socket that reduces installation force and speeds up assembly. With a 100-year design life, the enhanced Tegra 600 delivers a durable, contractor-friendly option for modern wastewater networks.

### The number one Access Junction

Wavin's Access Junction (WAJ) has been Irish contractors no.1 choice for the past 45 years. Independently certified, it's available in 10 flow profiles and complete with Wafix seals, a triple layer captive seal so you know that when a pipe is in, it's in. The socket profile allows a high angle of deflection so there is more connection flexibility. There are also extras such as directional flow arrows to reduce the risk of installation errors.

### Wavin Sewer

Wavin's PVC-U below ground drainage system offers a comprehensive range in 110mm, 160mm, 244mm, 315mm, 400mm and 500mm sizes for gravity drainage and sewer installations. Fittings with a green seal feature RootSeal technology which harmlessly repels tree roots to help prevent damage to the pipe system. Wavin Sewer also offers SN4 or SN8 pipe options and seamless integration with the Wavin Inspection Chamber ranges.

To speak to the Wavin team about your project needs contact [projects.ie@wavin.com](mailto:projects.ie@wavin.com)



# WINNER

## IRISH AGENCY OF THE YEAR

### 2022, 2023, 2025 & 2026



## HOOKE & MACDONALD

Hooke & MacDonald won this prestigious award for 2026 and for 3 previous years in recognition of the achievements of the company's New Homes, Development Land, Investment & Commercial Teams as well as the Property Management, Lettings and Marketing Teams.



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# Ringlock

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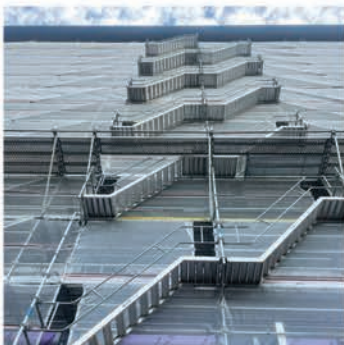
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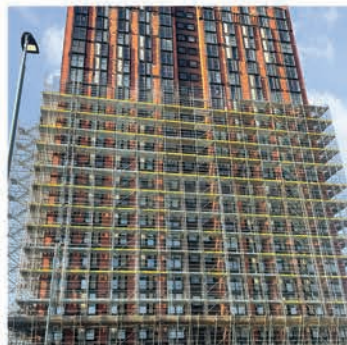
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