

# SURVEYORS JOURNAL

VOLUME 10  
ISSUE 2  
SUMMER  
2020

## AN INSTANT DIFFERENCE

KNOW YOUR LEASE



SOCIETY OF  
**CHARTERED  
SURVEYORS**  
IRELAND

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

SURVEYING DURING COVID

SAVING OUR TOWN CENTRES

SURVEYING SOFTWARE



**RICS**

# 20,000+ PROPERTIES NATIONWIDE

MyHome is here for you wherever you are  
- Mobile, Tablet & Desktop

## Discover:



HUNDREDS OF  
THOUSANDS  
OF PROPERTY  
IMAGES

VIRTUAL WALK  
THROUGHS

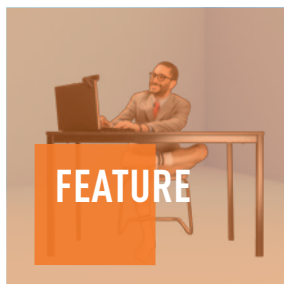


INTERACTIVE  
MAPS

CHECK OUT  
LOCAL SCHOOLS  
AND AMENITIES  
IN THE AREA



Search from the convenience of your own home



# CONTENTS

■ President's message	4
■ Editorial	5
■ Business news	6
■ Pandemic and revolution?	12
■ Building digital	16
■ Everything happens somewhere	18
■ Making space	20
■ An instant difference	22
■ Towns at the centre	24
■ Planning perils – part I	26
■ The rise of land rental	28
■ Society news	30
■ Surveyor profile	33
■ The last word	34

Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland,  
38 Merrion Square,  
Dublin 2.

Tel: 01-644 5500  
Email: [info@scsi.ie](mailto:info@scsi.ie)  
Web: [www.scsi.ie](http://www.scsi.ie)

Shirley Coulter, Chief Executive

**[www.scsi.ie](http://www.scsi.ie)**

Views expressed by contributors or correspondents are not necessarily those of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland or the publisher and neither the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland nor the publisher accept any responsibility for them.

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Tom Dunne	Chairman
John Costello	Costello Commercial
Tom Cullen	Think Media
Kieran Garry	SCSI
Brian Gilson	Lisney
Ann-Marie Hardiman	Think Media
Frank Harrington	Smith Harrington
Patrick King	SCSI
Edward McAuley	SCSI
Paul Mooney	Benchmark Property
Paul O'Grady	Think Media
Rowena Quinn	Hunters
Andrew Ramsey	Module Surveying and Design Ltd
Sarah Sherlock	Murphy Surveys
Claire Solon	Greystar Ireland
John Vaudin	Round Hill Capital

## PUBLISHERS

Published on behalf of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland by Think Media

<b>Editorial:</b>	Ann-Marie Hardiman
	Paul O'Grady
	Colm Quinn
<b>Design:</b>	Tony Byrne
	Tom Cullen
	Niamh Short
<b>Advertising:</b>	Paul O'Grady

## LETTERS, COMMENTS AND ARTICLES WELCOME

All submissions will be considered by the Editorial Board: [editor@scsi.ie](mailto:editor@scsi.ie)

# LOOKING AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE

AS SOCIETY OPENS UP, THE SCSi WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT MEMBERS.

**W**hile it's premature to try to assess the long-term legacy of Covid-19, there's no doubt that its effects have been and will continue to be far reaching. I previously expressed confidence that we would get through this together, and I'm very happy to report that that confidence was not misplaced. By complying with the relevant health and safety guidance, members have played their part in the national effort to help contain the virus, while continuing to offer clients the best service possible. In addition, we know of many members who are playing key roles in their local communities and we commend them for their efforts.

## Rising to the challenge

The last three months have also provided daunting challenges for the SCSi as an organisation and we can take great pride in the professionalism and leadership displayed by our volunteer committee members during this time. The SCSi – ably led by CEO Shirley Coulter – has worked immensely hard to provide practical support to members, and to facilitate a safe and prompt reopening of the construction and property sectors. The Society has continued to operate in a 'business as usual' mode, while adapting to the changing needs of members.

We may be through the worst of this crisis; however, as the then Taoiseach said: "It isn't over yet". We may need to deal with the re-imposition of restrictions, with all the accompanying negative effects on business and social life. Given that social distancing looks set to be with us for some time, it's clear that technology will play an increasing role in the way we do business. Whatever sector you work in, adapting to new ways of doing business, being open to innovation, and improving the client and customer experience will be critical. Of course, technological advances will have to be informed by surveyors' experience and expertise – and we can't forget or underestimate the importance of the human aspect!

## Support

With both our personal and professional worlds appearing to simultaneously shrink and, paradoxically, grow more distant, we need to support colleagues who may be struggling to cope. It is more important than ever to try to stay healthy, maintain a positive outlook, and continue to network and engage with friends and colleagues alike.

On a personal note, as this is my last President's message, I would like to thank the SCSi staff, volunteer members and indeed all members, as well as my colleagues in Cushman & Wakefield, for the tremendous support and advice they have given me during my term as President. It has been a wonderful experience. Micheál Mahon will take over in August, and I wish him the very best for his presidency. Stay safe and look after each other.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Johanna Gill  
President



## BACK TO WORK

Many challenges remain as the sector gets back to work, and we all have our part to play.



# EXCEPTIONAL CHANGE

THE PANDEMIC WILL SERVE AS A CATALYST FOR  
CHANGE IN THE PROFESSION.

**S**ince the last edition of the *Surveyors Journal* we have all made exceptional changes to our lives, many of which we could never have imagined other than perhaps after watching a film about some catastrophic event. And it's not over yet. All of us will have stories about working from home, problems with IT, and simply coping with what must surely have been the biggest change to our working lives we've ever experienced. I am sure therefore that all of you will read with great interest about the experience of three surveyors from different backgrounds in 'Pandemic and Revolution?'. In general, I have the impression of great success with working remotely and with IT resources not familiar to many up until recently. Of course working from home has its challenges, particularly for those with young children. Surely, however, the pandemic will serve as a catalyst for a more widespread digitisation in the practice of surveying in all its manifestations. As many return to offices, facility management surveyors in particular have a vital role in helping companies return to work, and it will be fascinating to see how workplaces will be changed, perhaps forever, by the experiences of the past couple of months.

It was great to see that the Society worked well remotely, including all the working groups, committees and officers, and particularly the staff, all of whom kept things going, engaged with Government and other professions, and contributed to acquiring and providing much-needed advice in what can only be described as novel circumstances. The way in which they have met these challenges can only instil confidence for the future.

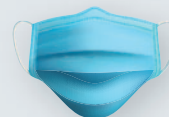
Can I add my congratulations to Tomás Kelly, Frank Harrington, Liam Daly, Michael Boyd and Shane O'Beirne on becoming fellows, a well-deserved honour, which should encourage others to come forward and have their achievements recognised.

## EDITORIAL

Tom Dunne  
Editor

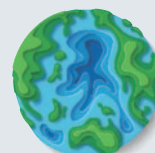


### Pandemic by numbers



**116 million**

surgical masks are being produced  
per day in China



**58%**

Drop in daily EU carbon  
dioxide emissions



**200 tonnes**

of medical waste produced per day  
in Wuhan (400% increase)



**67 million**

Fewer air passengers  
in Europe



**50%**

Drop in Irish  
car pollution

Sources: mywaste.ie, Financial Times, South China Morning Post, OAG, EU Environment Agency.

# SCSI RESPONSE TO COVID-19: SAFETY AND PRACTICAL SUPPORTS KEY

The decision of the SCSI in early March to trial remote working with a 'Work from Home Day' on Monday, March 16, to test the Society's capability to function with all staff working remotely proved prescient. Shortly afterwards all businesses effectively shut down and staff did not return to the office. The fact that the Society was fully prepared to operate remotely facilitated a smooth transition to working from home and ensured that it was able to respond in a timely manner to members' needs under lockdown.

## Practical help

The main priority for the team in Merrion Square was to provide as much practical help as possible to members. This has been achieved by issuing regular updates and guidance notes to members via email and ezines, while also setting up a dedicated coronavirus page on the SCSI website containing all the relevant information.

With all events cancelled, the Society moved quickly to shift CPD online. The focus of webinars has been and continues to be on Covid-19 and its impact on members across the property and construction sectors.



As you can see from below, there has been a massive take-up of the many webinars on offer.

Further practical measures included the establishment of a confidential HR and Employment Law Helpdesk, which was available to SCSI members at no additional cost, while the SCSI also identified a supplier of personal protective equipment (PPE) for members at discounted rates.

## Preparing for the 'new normal'

The second strand of the SCSI's response was business continuity for the Society itself, its Council, Board and Professional Groups (PGs). While the decision was taken to postpone the AGM until early August, thanks to the dedication of all the members of these groups, and the hard-working staff, the SCSI has continued to function as close to normal as possible, with regular online meetings across all PGs and committees. As a result all key projects have progressed during the lockdown and many new initiatives have commenced as part of the third strand of the plan: to prepare for working in the new coronavirus environment.

The overwhelming and consistent message delivered through the Covid-19 member impact survey conducted in late April, through PG and committee meetings, emails and phone calls was simply – "to get back to work safely as soon as possible".

The Society engaged with all stakeholders to ensure an early return of construction and property, which commenced with the remobilisation of construction on May 18. The SCSI drafted the 'Surveying Safely' protocol to enable members to return to work safely and, through our Chairmanship of the Construction Industry Council (CIC), also helped to co-ordinate the response of industry bodies and to lobby for a sustained recovery plan for the sector.

At the same time the Society worked with the Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) and the Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers (IPAV) on a Joint Sector Property Protocol, which was presented to the Department of Housing and which enabled the safe return to work of our property members on June 8.

While no one is underestimating the challenges that lie ahead, the Society and the team in Merrion Square will be there to provide as much help and support as possible as we all navigate the 'new normal' in the coming weeks and months.



**Glennon have a number of specialist insurance solutions for Property Professionals in the following key areas:**

- ✓ **Professional Indemnity**
- ✓ **Cyber Liability**
- ✓ **Directors and Officers Liability**
- ✓ **Office Insurance**
- ✓ **Exclusive Home & Motor Insurance for Chartered Surveyors and their spouses or partners.**

**Call: 01 7075800**

**Visit: [surveyors.glennons.ie](https://surveyors.glennons.ie)**

**Email: [business@glennons.ie](mailto:business@glennons.ie)**

Frank Glennon Limited, trading as "Glennon" and "Glennon Insurances", is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

# SCSI ESTABLISHES EXPERT WORKING GROUPS



Coronavirus has impacted on us all in one way or another. In response, the SCSI established several working groups, which have been assigned specific tasks in the areas of property, land and construction.

As you are probably aware the SCSI represents 12 professional disciplines with experts across the entire built environment. This places our organisation in a unique position to provide accurate, well-informed advice to the Government and State agencies on the steps required to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and maintain a thriving economy.

The delivery of housing and maintaining vibrant commercial and

construction sectors are areas in which the SCSI has invested much time and resources. That is why we established expert groups to consider new initiatives to stimulate ways of bringing more housing to the market, to ensure that funding streams continue and that our important capital investment plan is secured.

It is also vital that we avoid the mistakes of the past, which saw mass emigration, particularly from those in the construction sectors, leading to widespread skills shortages. With the formation of the new coalition Government finally complete, the SCSI will be ready to play an active role in representing the industry as the authoritative voice for our members.

The expert working groups include:

1. Assisting Property Market Recovery
2. Assisting Construction Sector Recovery
3. Develop Protocol Guidance for Sectors
4. Building a Sustainable Future
5. Rural Town Rejuvenation
6. The Future of our Residential and Commercial Rental Market

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright red coat and dark trousers, stands with her back to the camera, looking at a large framed photograph of a modern brick building. The photograph is mounted on a teal-colored wall. Above and below the large frame are several smaller, similarly framed photographs of various buildings. The floor is made of dark wood planks. A black stanchion with a rope is visible in the foreground.

## We see the bigger picture

**SCOTT****MURPHY**

CHARTERED BUILDING SURVEYORS

**Technical Due Diligence**  
**Project Management**  
**Defect Analysis**  
**Dilapidations**  
**Assigned Certifier**  
**Maintenance Management**  
**Development Monitoring**

18 Dame Street  
First Floor  
Dublin 2  
D02 XF59  
T: 00 353 | 660 6644  
Visit us at [www.scottmurphy.ie](http://www.scottmurphy.ie)

The logo for the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland, featuring a stylized 'S' and the text 'SOCIETY OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS IRELAND'.The RICS logo, featuring a stylized globe and the text 'RICS the mark of property professionalism worldwide'.



## NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR NO.1 SOUTH MALL



The Building Consultancy's design and project management teams have completed the refurbishment of Cork City's iconic No.1 South Mall. The six-storey office block with views over the river Lee was first constructed in 1963. The company states that the new €2m fit-out involved new mechanical and electrical installations, and refurbished office floors, common areas and reception: "We were delighted to have been involved in bringing a new lease of life to this property in the centre of Cork City".

## ORS APPOINTS DARREN HOLMES



ORS has announced the appointment of Darren Holmes as Associate. Darren leads the Building Surveying Team and ORS states that he has significant experience with commercial projects ranging from conveyancing and building surveys to construction and project management.

John Brennan, ORS Managing Director, said: "Darren has been with ORS since 2010 and has worked across many departments, proving himself to be a fully committed member of the team".

The company states that Darren's appointment is a reflection of its expansion and of his dedication to building the practice, and that thanks to his experience, Darren provides an 'all-in' customer-focused service and builds strong working relationships with customers. Commenting on his appointment, Darren said: "ORS has always provided me with opportunities to continuously learn and grow with the company. It truly is a great place to work, not only for the opportunities provided, but for the positive environment that encourages personal and professional development. As a multidisciplinary firm, our Chartered Surveyors are supported by Chartered Engineers in various fields of engineering such as structural and fire safety".

**Earn As You Learn**

Applications are now open for our new five year DT8155 BSc in Quantity Surveying and Construction Economics.

Limited space available.  
College one day per week and a full-time job.

**TU DUBLIN**  
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

For details see [www.tudublin.ie](http://www.tudublin.ie) or contact [alan.hore@TUDublin.ie](mailto:alan.hore@TUDublin.ie)

**Stokes Property**  
has joined the  
**Singer Vielle**  
Network

THE NEW FACE OF  
PROPERTY IN IRELAND!

Stokes Property is now a part of  
The Singer Vielle Network offering:

- Unrivalled quality of presentation;
- Unrivalled international depth of marketing;
- clicktopurchase® online execution platform;
- Unique online private treaty or auction;
- Speed to market with proven results;
- Highly cost-efficient marketing;
- Blockchain and AI enabled.

**Stokes**  
PROPERTY  
part of the Singer Vielle network

**STOKESPROPERTY.IE**  
+ 353 1 233 4600





## IRELAND'S LARGEST DEDICATED PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMPANY

Aramark Property has over 135 employees operating throughout Ireland with offices in Dublin and Cork. We are responsible for the property and finance management of property schemes totalling over 3 million m<sup>2</sup>.



## OUR KEY SERVICE LINES ARE:



ASSET  
MANAGEMENT



COMMERCIAL  
PROPERTY  
MANAGEMENT



BUILD TO RENT / PRS  
MANAGEMENT (RESIDENTIAL  
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT)



VALUATION,  
RENT REVIEWS &  
PROFESSIONAL  
SERVICES



SUSTAINABILITY  
SERVICES



BUILDING  
CONSULTANCY



FACILITIES  
MANAGEMENT



PROCUREMENT

## CONTACT US

TEL: (01) 871 5400

[ARAMARKPROPERTY.IE](http://aramarkproperty.ie)

ARAMARK PROPERTY, ST. STEPHEN'S GREEN HOUSE, EARLSFORT TERRACE, DUBLIN 2

# SCSI OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland is delighted to announce that its offices on 38 Merrion Square will reopen on July 20.

The SCSI office is reopening with staggered staff attendance and visitors are welcome by appointment only. Please call 01-644 5500 or email [info@scsi.ie](mailto:info@scsi.ie) to make an appointment.



## SINGER VIELLE EXPANDS INTO IRELAND



Stokes Property consultants is the latest agency to join the Singer Vielle Network, as the commercial investment agency expands its operation into Ireland.

Neil Singer, Senior Partner, Singer Vielle says: "We are delighted to be working with Simon Stokes and his team. Stokes

Property's clients will benefit from the superior marketing solutions and leading technology of the Singer Vielle Network and all our clients will now have access to expert local knowledge of the Irish market".

Stokes Property is a boutique firm of Chartered Surveyors based in Dublin, specialising in offering a bespoke and personal service to meet the specific needs of clients. The company was established in 2012 and states it provides a full suite of agency, consultancy, management and professional services to a range of private, corporate and institutional clients.

Simon Stokes, Managing Director of Stokes Property states: "We are excited to join the Singer Vielle Network and to offer our clients excellent global marketing services and its clicktopurchase platform".



## MODULE GROUP

Andrew Ramsey: 087 125 9386 / [andrew@modulegroup.ie](mailto:andrew@modulegroup.ie)

Shane Hynes: 086 012 6820 / [shane@modulegroup.ie](mailto:shane@modulegroup.ie)



Dilapidations



Fit-out Design



Building Surveys



Project Management



BC(a)R Compliance



Health & Safety / PSDP



# INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE CHALLENGE 2020



Students who participated in IREC 2020 (from left): Kate Goland; Andrew Donoghue; Melanie Tchibor; Adam Ghee; Rory O'Neill; Patrick Bolger; John Casey; Patrick O'Boy; Eve Sutton; Tomas Macukas; and, Monica Doyle.

The International Real Estate Challenge (IREC) is a student competition that brings together students from across Europe, from both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, to work in teams on a simulated European real estate problem/case study. Property Economics and Auctioneering, and Valuation and Estate Agency students from TU Dublin (previously DIT) have been taking up the challenge for over 15 years. Some claim it has changed their lives, others that it was the most rewarding aspect of their undergraduate education. It is supported by the universities involved (11 in total, with the recent inclusion of Madrid, Spain, and Tampere, Finland) and by local property firms.

The IREC works by putting students from each participating university into city groups, not with their peers but with students from other universities. They meet in the host city, Milan, where they are introduced to their new teams and the challenge case study. The case study gives the background to a hypothetical client and their search for a new European location. Then, with the help of tutors from the universities, they work on the detail of the case study to try to identify the hypothetical client's criteria for location and building. During this time, they also get to know each other and learn to navigate through group dynamics.

A few days later, the teams fly to their allocated city, where they are met by a local real estate specialist or university tutor who shows them around the city and helps them to identify buildings that might meet the criteria they have identified. They must then choose between the options identified and return to the host city to pitch their city and building choice to their client. The client is represented initially by the university tutors, but on the final day this role is taken by a cast

of real estate experts, SCSi representatives and local stakeholders. From the 11 groups, three are chosen to present to the board of experts and ultimately one is chosen by them as the winner.

This year seven students from second year of the Property Economics course and three from the third year Auctioneering course took part. As usual they represented TU Dublin extremely well, with all our students stepping up to present and speak on behalf of their teams, and three getting to the final round: Melanie Tchibor, Katie Goland and John Casey from the Property Economics course. The winner this year was the Dublin team who, while not including any TU Dublin students, were tutored by our own lecturers Declan McKeown and Frank Harrington, and their chosen building was the Iveagh Markets.

The challenge is a great educational experience, which leaves its impact on both the participants and the tutors. It places our students in an international context, up against and working with people from all cultures, languages and levels. They never cease to amaze each year with their confidence, friendliness, capabilities, teamwork and willingness to work hard when they need to.

It is our great hope that despite the recent Covid-19 restrictions, and with the support of TU Dublin and the real estate community, this challenge will be able to continue in 2021 and for many years to come. As Jane Austin said: "It isn't what we say or think that defines us, but what we do". Well done to this year's team for stepping up and taking on the challenge: Patrick Bolger; John Casey; Andrew Donoghue; Monica Doyle; Adam Ghee; Kate Goland; Tomas Macukas; Patrick O'Boy; Rory O'Neill; Melanie Tchibor; and, Eve Sutton.

# PANDEMIC AND REVOLUTION?

THE *SURVEYORS JOURNAL* SPOKE TO THREE SURVEYORS TO SEE HOW THEIR WORK CHANGED DURING LOCKDOWN, HOW COVID-19 IS AFFECTING THE SECTOR, AND HOW SOME CHANGES APPEAR MORE PERMANENT THAN OTHERS.

## Declan Magee, Senior Cost Manager, Linesight



Declan's work takes him around Europe and often involves working remotely while travelling. This helped with the adjustment to working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown: "Working remotely wasn't really a new concept for me or the team. The lockdown period has thrown up a few challenges, but I've found that making use of all the various technologies that are available – be it email, virtual meeting platforms or cloud technologies – has definitely made things easier".

Highlighting that working remotely shouldn't equate to working alone, Declan notes: "Communication with clients and colleagues is vital. It's been an anxious few months for many people, so it is important to maintain contact and keep clients up to date on how projects are progressing. Our communications team has produced a number of useful resources for clients throughout the pandemic, including a Covid-19 project diary, a white paper exploring the impact of Covid-19 on the construction industry (both globally and regionally), and a webinar at the end of May on future trends in the construction industry post Covid".

Although sites were shut down for a period, the entire construction industry didn't grind to a halt, and the period has actually served as an opportunity to assess how well teams can work remotely: "Our team was kicking off a large estimate at the start of lockdown, which was completed while working remotely. Managing the team and information flow in an entirely virtual environment was a new challenge, but it went smoothly and was successful, which was great!"

Declan notes that it was reassuring to see how quickly his company adjusted and how proactive the entire organisation was, whether it was support from the IT department in getting everyone set up to work from home, or the daily communication from Group CEO Gerard Campbell: "The Linesight management team has provided a huge number of resources via our staff intranet and internal applications to help keep us all comfortable while working from home; from mental health initiatives, online training and CPD, to virtual social events, the company has been very supportive".

Declan has completed a master's on the use of IT and new technologies in the construction industry, such as building information modelling (BIM), cloud technologies and augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR), and he fervently believes that these will play a key role in the future of the industry: "I have seen more talk around the use of building models and VR technology, for

which I'm a big advocate, and ultimately, this pandemic may well serve as the catalyst for more widespread digitisation within the industry. We have all seen technology, such as 3D scanning, being introduced into projects to view buildings or view progress on site, but going forward, the true adoption and implementation of technology in construction seems imminent. In the long term, I can see the importance of integrated technologies coming to the fore, as people realise the benefits they can bring".

But what impact does Declan think this pandemic will have on the industry? While construction has undoubtedly been affected, he is hopeful for the future success of the sector: "In the longer run, I am optimistic and excited. People are very quick to adapt, as we saw with this pandemic, and have learnt new skills and to use new technologies while working remotely. The hope is that the industry will become more efficient in the long run, as we embrace the use of new technology and digitisation, as well as implementing off-site methodologies such as modularisation and off-site fabrication, to reduce numbers on site. I do think we'll take some positives from it!"

## FEATURE

Colm Quinn  
Journalist and Sub-editor,  
Think Media





**WORKING REMOTELY WASN'T REALLY A NEW  
CONCEPT FOR ME OR THE TEAM. THE LOCKDOWN  
PERIOD HAS THROWN UP A FEW CHALLENGES,  
BUT I'VE FOUND THAT MAKING USE OF ALL THE  
VARIOUS TECHNOLOGIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE  
HAS DEFINITELY MADE THINGS EASIER**



## Lily Ellis, corporate real estate and facilities management, JLL



Lily works on the JLL European account for a large tech company, so managing people in different locations was not new. One thing that is different is childcare. Lily has three children but says she is fortunate that she and her husband have been able to use different work schedules to split minding their children.

It has been more of an adjustment for people working for her, she explains. Firstly, there is a team that would usually be organising events: "They're doing online training but you can't bill 40 hours a week with online training if your job is normally moving furniture and setting up events". Other employees on her team have young families and have found it difficult. She says these people are not working from home, they're parenting from work: "Both partners may be at home, both trying to work and they probably have found it the most difficult in terms of trying to manage work-life balance, small kids, no creche, no granny and grandad, no break".

JLL has been doing a number of things to support staff during lockdown, she says, such as Zoom calls to keep in touch: "Every second day [we speak with] the facilities co-ordinators who are still performing their duties remotely, and then every other day is everybody on the account and those are a social thing. I tend to let the team staff lead those calls and not necessarily join. Those calls have been anything and everything from my favourite trip, something that you don't know about me, what did I want to be when I was a kid ... The feedback from the team on that has been that they hope that stays after the coronavirus". From an FM perspective, Lily predicts the pandemic will lead to reduced occupancy in buildings: "Even when the offices are back open, you're not going to have 100% occupancy. For example, if you had a space that could accommodate 100 people, you are probably looking at having between 30 and 50% of those desks occupied, with the 2m restriction as it is at the moment".

Lily says we are already seeing the purpose of the office changing. The emerging preference of employees seems to be to do desk-based work from home: "When they come into the office, it will be very much for the culture, the face-to-face interaction, the club environment I guess of being with your

peers and doing things that you can't do remotely".

Lily says that before this crisis, many companies worried that if they went remote, productivity would drop, but this period has shown that fear to be unfounded: "Productivity hasn't actually been impacted. In most instances, it's gone up".

With people working from home, there is the danger that they will be unable to separate their work life from their home life, and Lily says it's important to take steps to stop this: "I think one of the things that is really difficult is that balance, that you do switch off, that you do turn off at the weekend and in the evenings. I've made a conscious effort on a Saturday and a Sunday not to work".

She is optimistic and believes the Irish workforce has done itself proud during this crisis: "The Dublin market as a whole is in a really good place for FDI with the resilience that employees in Dublin have been able to demonstrate, the productivity that they've been able to demonstrate for a lot of the big pharma companies, the tech companies. I don't necessarily see anybody else that could compete with us at that level, and sustain the resilience that we've sustained here".

## TJ Cronin, residential and general practice surveyor, Irish & European



"In the course of a couple of days, our old norms were reshaped. Instantly, it made us upskill to the digital world," says TJ Cronin.

With viewings stopped, residential surveyors had to adopt new methods and technologies quickly, he explains: "Basically, what stopped was the agency side of things for a period of time ... The valuation work that I was able to do was on properties that had been previously inspected. Ongoing valuation reviews and stuff like that were fine, but you couldn't take on any new instructions until inspections could be carried out".

Sales did not stop entirely, however: "After some weeks, the inquiries started to come through. We negotiated a number of sales while we were on lockdown. Again, they were with people who had viewed properties previously. Unfortunately, we had to renegotiate some sales that were negotiated pre Covid".

New technology has been coming into the property industry for many years now, but the pandemic may have given some of this the shot in the arm it needs to finally go mainstream:

"We're going into the virtual reality world in terms of viewings. That's going to be the new norm, so we have to adapt to that".

While it is unrealistic to think that someone will purchase a property on the strength of a virtual viewing, it will certainly be a market enhancer: "While it may look lovely and so on and so forth, there's nothing that can trump the ability to get into a property and look around and get a feel for it, and get a feel for the location. As good as virtual viewings are, they don't give the complete story ... It's a huge benefit, a huge aid, but it's not a replacement for a physical viewing".

One of the advantages of virtual viewings, however, is that they allow for the ultimate in social distancing, says TJ: "While Covid-19 is still with us, there is still a certain amount of anxiety there. Notwithstanding that, I think looking forward into the future virtual viewings will become the new norm. Only a short time ago, you might get two or three pictures in a brochure. Now you get an absolute library of pictures on the net for a property. And it's only one step forward in moving into virtual tours".

TJ says Covid-19 has induced uncertainty into the market, however: "All the media commentary has been relaying a devaluation and while that might be true in the short term, I do foresee that there are the same underpinning issues in the market, in terms of a lack of supply of property ... I think there will be price alterations: as to how much, I cannot comment yet. We just don't know. The market will tell us that in the coming weeks".

One advantage of lockdown was that everyone seemed to pull together: "There was a sense that everybody was in this together. There was a greater understanding between clients and agents and there was a sense of if we can get it done, let's get it done".

He says property professionals need to get the word out that they are doing the best they can to provide a service in unprecedented times: "If there's one thing I'd like to get across, it's that the PSRA, the SCSi and IPAV came together wholeheartedly and diligently with the Department of Housing and agreed the joint-sector protocols in relation to property viewings, inspections and so on. Safety is our primary concern".





# BUILDING SURVEYING

ORS is a prominent Irish building consultancy. With offices in the East and West of Ireland, ORS has nationwide reach.

The ORS Building Surveying Team stands out from the crowd because our Chartered Surveyors are supported by Chartered Engineers in various fields of engineering such as structural and fire safety. This is unique in the market.

We survey the built environment, advising clients on a wide range of issues from property registration to building compliance, including:

- Building Surveys
- Schedules of Dilapidation
- Schedules of Condition
- Land Registry
- Compliant Mapping
- Topographical and As-Built Surveys
- Measured Building Surveys

#### Contact

Darren Holmes,  
Associate, ORS  
E: [d.holmes@ors.ie](mailto:d.holmes@ors.ie)  
T: +353 1 524 2060  
W: [ors.ie](http://ors.ie)

#### Offices Nationwide

Dublin | Mullingar |  
Donegal | Cork |  
Galway

# BUILDING DIGITAL

USING ONE OF THE MANY SURVEYING SOFTWARE PLATFORMS AVAILABLE CAN INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND IMPROVE THE SERVICE A BUILDING SURVEYOR OFFERS TO THEIR CLIENTS.

**T**echnology predictions have a habit of coming back to bite the original author. The iPhone obviously continues to defy the original prediction and hold just a little segment of market share. Its impact is similar to the release of the iPad in 2010; it changed our daily interaction with technology. Some will argue for the better and some for the worse, but our connectivity in work practices has never been greater and this has been especially evident and beneficial in recent months. For surveying the condition of buildings, the adoption of specialist software has been slow in some areas, but it is becoming more common. For it to become the norm, both surveyors and consumers need to understand the benefits. The building surveyor will be upgrading and adapting to a new method of inspection, data collection and report writing. These new skills result in a benefit for the surveyor and the consumer – a detailed, professional report that far exceeds the days of clipboards and voice-recorded notes typed by secretaries and then proofread. The other main benefit is that a more detailed approach and report means a far reduced chance of missing defects, a benefit that the surveyors' insurers will greatly appreciate.

**“THERE IS NO CHANCE THAT THE  
IPHONE IS GOING TO GET ANY  
SIGNIFICANT MARKET SHARE” –  
STEVE BALLMER, *USA TODAY*, 2007**

## FEATURE

Gary Morris  
Building Surveying & Design





My own building surveying proptech experience started almost four years ago, on a software platform that subsequently ceased providing domestic surveys. At the time, I reviewed the small number of surveying software options available and focused on packages that were largely similar in feature content to the one I had been using. All relied on an iPad as the necessary hardware. The costs therefore involved purchase of an iPad and a Home Survey RICS licence fee, and the cost of the software itself. The overall digital transformation cost for a single operator was approximately €3,500.

Four years on, and with the benefit of having used two different software platforms, I can outline some of the key features of building surveying software that I have found essential to productivity, and some tips to get the most out of them.

### Use RICS

The software should be based on the RICS Home Survey template. There are three templates available – I use the building survey template, as it is the most relevant to the Irish market. On site, I find that it encourages a detailed inspection process. By following the template sections, you enter each room a number of times. This gives you multiple opportunities to identify any defects – something as subtle as a decorated leak stain or a movement crack that was obscure on first view. It doesn't slow you down in this regard – it is just inherent to the process.

### Build a library of phrases

These are phrases that refer to elements of the building or describe repetitive defects typical to different styles of housing. I have found the existing phrase libraries to be specific to buildings in different geographic areas. City housing stock with gas heating and public services contrasts greatly with rural dwellings with septic tanks. Therefore, it is important to invest the time in building your own library of phrases at the outset.

### On the fly editing

Once you have completed the initial step of creating your own library of phrases, a key feature is that you can select, edit and add phrases as you survey. This is where you can gain time and accuracy. The first package I used had a great feature where the phrases could be added on the fly. My current provider has scheduled this as an upgrade.

### Photo edit

Being able to modify and mark up photos is great for marking the extent of movement, settlement cracks, areas of defect and highlighting areas of concern. This feature is useful at the report writing stage, when you may see a pattern of cracks that had not been noticed on site. Some packages have this built in, while others partner their software to a separate editing application.

### Voice recording

This is a feature that I have yet to fully utilise. The theory is that you dictate the descriptions of the property elements into the iPad, but this is not always possible if discretion is required or if there is a lot of background noise. If used properly, it should shorten the typing time for those lacking in keyboard dexterity.

### Technical support

My experience of two different software packages has been positive in this regard. Both have had responsive support teams and you will need some assistance in the early stages. The speed of response has been good and small tech problems are quickly resolved.

In short, if you are considering upgrading or transforming, expect that it will take some time to familiarise yourself with the software. Depending on the complexity of the property you are surveying, your time on site for repetitive standard housing will likely shorten, and for more complex housing it may lengthen – but your report writing time will reduce, especially considering the detail produced.

My advice to any surveyor wanting to produce a detailed, professional report that their clients will appreciate is to go digital. The investment required to upskill will be repaid many times over in satisfied clients, which should help you build your own significant market share.



# EVERYTHING HAPPENS SOMEWHERE

LOCATION INTELLIGENCE, AND THE PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH IT,  
HAVE A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN HOW BUSINESS AND SOCIETY  
WILL BE ORGANISED IN THE FUTURE.

**W**ithout geography, you're nowhere. It impacts on us as individuals, as workers, as citizens, and as human beings. After 30 years in the geospatial industry, my experience of working closely with public and private sector organisations is that 'location, place and geography' has fast become an accepted technology and information platform, helping business leaders to make better, more informed decisions.

## Location, place and geography

Location, place and geography is an essential framework, or common language, to help us keep track of what's going on, and where. Nearly all data can be linked to a physical location and time. However, location isn't just a common thread connecting disparate data sources and breaking down silos; often it provides transformative insights. Location intelligence is powered by geographic information systems (GIS). A GIS is a platform that provides a framework of capabilities to manage, visualise, analyse, optimise and ultimately understand the impact of location, place and geography.

## FEATURE

Paul Synnott  
Managing Director, Esri Ireland



People instinctively think that the terms 'location, place and geography' mean the same thing. They don't! Location connects people to place. With location, we create information through location-based visualisation. This basic manipulation of data answers the question: 'Where is it?' Place then helps us to understand the impact of where things are, developing greater meaning through location-based analysis. This deeper dive into our data answers the question: 'What is going on around me?' Geography provides a common canvas on which we make decisions, developing greater insight through location-based optimisation. In this final stage, we start to enquire: 'How can I make it better?' This is the essence of what we, at Esri Ireland, call 'The Science of Where'.

### Global intelligence

The global use of location intelligence is expected to double by 2025, becoming a \$25 billion industry (BusinessWire.com), and expanding at a compound annual growth rate of over 15% over this period. A key driver in this growth is the growing use of location, place and geography by the private sector. By the end of next year there will be 25 billion internet of things (IoT) devices, rising to 80 billion by 2025 ([www.thesslstore.com/blog/20-surprising-iot-statistics-you-dont-already-know/](http://www.thesslstore.com/blog/20-surprising-iot-statistics-you-dont-already-know/)). By 2023, there will be 3.5 billion cellular connections alone, with an annual anticipated growth rate of 30%, giving rise to over 25 million apps. All of this connectedness will generate 50 trillion Gb of data and \$4 trillion in revenue opportunity.

Senior business executives now have access to unprecedented amounts of geospatial data. In a recent Deloitte Industry 4.0 survey of 361 executives across 11 countries, 94% of respondents reported digital transformation as their organisation's top strategic initiative. These executives understand that location data provides unique insights, revealing hidden patterns and relationships in their data that subsequently drive stronger decision-making. With over 80% of business data containing geographic information, the combination of geospatial data and location intelligence delivers insights into markets, customers, services, logistics, supply chains, and asset, facilities and risk management.

This is happening across all industry sectors: at Esri Ireland we have cases from over 150 active customers across 16 industry sectors, all of whom are making better business decisions driven by knowing where things are.

We live in a world that is increasingly defined by problems that are inherently spatial. There is much evidence of this here in Ireland, e.g., planning and development, housing, homelessness, the National Children's Hospital, sustainability, transport infrastructure, illegal dumping, and so on. In fact, Project Ireland 2040 itself is an inherently spatial strategy and will require strong geospatial planning, thinking and reasoning skills if it is to be successful.

On a broader scale, the United Nations (UN) has been working for years to combine geospatial and statistical information to visualise patterns, address data gaps, and effectively target resources to areas demonstrating the most need in order to improve overall development outcomes. It is now broadly accepted that the private sector has a

critical role to play in the UN's 2030 Agenda, and in particular to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Underpinning these SDGs are over 230 indicators, 168 of which are influenced and impacted by location, place and geography.

### Role of surveyors

There is little doubt that today's business and political leaders are confronted by consumers and citizens who are deeply concerned about fraying communities, rising inequality, safe and sustainable industry practices, and climate crises. The surveying, conveyancing and geospatial communities must help to join the dots between the work that is done at a local customer and community level, and that required to manage the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable business and development at regional, national and global levels. This will require stakeholder organisations to work openly and in partnership with each other to make their respective data holdings usable, relatable and available. It will also require the surveying, conveyancing and geospatial community to work in partnership to ensure that such data is easily accessible through a connected system of purpose.

### Covid-19

Now more than ever before, knowing 'where' matters. The geospatial community around the world has a significant leadership role to play in the response to Covid-19.

One of the greatest challenges in the war against disease is humanity's increasing mobility. As we know so well, a person can pick up a virus in one place and share it to any other location on the planet within hours. When disease can travel so quickly, information must move even faster and, in these instances, knowing where matters more than ever.

It is my personal and professional belief that, despite this current pandemic, a smarter and safer world is starting to take shape thanks to geospatial and other related technologies. It is increasingly clear that the geospatial community is growing its expertise and extending its reach throughout public and private sector organisations and other communities all over the world. The work we do is diverse and broad reaching, yet much of what we do focuses on mission-critical resource issues, key asset management, environmental management and mitigation, climate change, key urban initiatives, and other economic, environmental and social problems.

Given the ubiquitous nature of geography, and the fact that without geography you are, quite literally, nowhere, every business strategy, Government initiative, social programme and environmental consideration needs to be underpinned by location intelligence: 'knowing where matters'.





# MAKING SPACE

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SURVEYORS HAVE A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING COMPANIES TO RETURN TO WORK IN THE WAKE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

**A**s we have all heard countless times by now, the Covid-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed how workplaces are occupied and how spaces are used – especially since lockdown measures were introduced. Like many facilities management companies, the immediate challenge for Aramark was to balance the health and safety protocols required for essential workplaces that would remain open, and the security and safety needs of those that were forced to shut overnight. Thankfully, by putting people at the core of both approaches, we were able to take care of employees, clients and properties. Now, the challenge turns to business re-opening. The widespread closure of workplaces, schools, universities and childcare facilities has defined a new challenge for facilities management. As we prepare to re-occupy the buildings that were so speedily vacated in March, facilities managers are uniquely placed to design comprehensive solutions to the key challenges of re-occupation in the short term, and in the longer term, the cultural change towards flexible working and work from home.

## Keeping property operational


At the start of the lockdown, the focus of facilities and property managers, in tandem with their technical advisers, was on devising low-occupancy and vacant buildings procedures around securing property, reducing the risk of flooding, fire safety, power, water, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, and safety, right through to managing a building shutdown. While this task may have traditionally been seen as turning off the lights and locking the doors, the actions taken at this time were critical to keep properties operational, both for the tenant's security, and in order to maintain secure internet and server access for those employees now working from home.

## FEATURE

**Aodhán King**  
Divisional Director Building Consultancy,  
Aramark Northern Europe







On one particular site managed by Aramark Property, for example, our strategy included a full review of the planned preventive maintenance schedule, and a comprehensive energy saving audit. From identifying and modifying items such as the regular running of air handling units, or draining and shutdown of fountains and charging down of systems, this active management saved in the order of €40,000 to €50,000 in energy costs during the first two months alone (a saving of 20% over the normal outgoing for this time of year). With so much uncertainty surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, this phase also had to include procedures and processes to prepare for any reoccurrence of lockdown restrictions. Nothing was taken for granted.

### Re-occupation

As a pivotal support to business owners and leaders, facilities management teams have been busy preparing for re-occupancy, with detailed risk assessments, space planning, return to work strategies and on-site solutions being re-imagined. Given the variety of property management undertaken by Aramark, including over 30 shopping centres and retail parks, and 5,000 plus residential units, we have leveraged our multi-faceted experience to inform our office re-occupation strategies – both as a property manager and facilities management provider.

By understanding the individual needs of different industries and sectors, while also ensuring compliance with broad Government guidance, we have ensured that every client can be sure that their property is compliant and safe for their specific return to work needs. In many properties, the space required by social distancing will mean that a full complement return to work may not be possible, and many of our clients are having to consider a wide variety of occupancy demands for the near future – whether Government or employee requested. Despite prior policies, the forced adaption to Covid-19 lockdown terms has meant that business leaders, many of whom may have been less willing to accommodate remote working in the past, are now finding themselves having to consider this operational change.

### Impact of change on facilities management

Facilities will need to react quickly and effectively to these changing needs. Interestingly, we do not foresee less space being required, but we do see better space being created. The expectation is that quiet, internally focused work will be done at home while more space can be created in the office to form collaboration areas where staff can interact. Offices, it seems, will become an inherently 'social' space, where teams can work together, and in-person meetings can be facilitated and catered for. Facilities, then, will provide the physical infrastructure and technology, bringing together those working on site and those working at home.

Technology will also be a key feature of our role outside of 'traditional' office spaces. Decreasing expenditure, and increasing strain, on public transport is leading to increased independent travel by car, bicycle, motorbike and walking. With the push towards electric vehicles, parking plans are being reviewed to rationalise existing parking and to accommodate electric vehicle charging. Monitored, easy to maintain and secure bicycle parking, and enhanced waiting areas for visitors in the shared and common areas of properties, are also being developed.

### Adaption

Facilities management has proven to be an unsung hero in keeping properties secure and operational throughout this crisis. This has both reduced cost by managing utility costs and has reduced the potential risk from buildings not being maintained – potentially failing inspections, or worse, creating a health risk to occupants on re-occupation.

Risks acknowledged, superb work has been done across our industry. I have no doubt that the future is bright for facilities management, regardless of the emerging trends. By supporting clients with clear plans and costed solutions to engage with the reality of re-occupation, the technological infrastructure to meet changing demands, and a clear understanding of the new vision for office working, we will remain a critical solution to the diverse range of industries, sectors and clients we represent.

# AN INSTANT DIFFERENCE

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RENEWING AND EXTENDING A LEASE.

**A** commercial lease is a contractual agreement between a landlord and tenant that sets out the terms under which a property is occupied and used. It defines the rights and privileges afforded to a tenant in conjunction with a landlord, and all other persons nominated or authorised.

## Lease compliance

During the term of a lease most tenants are operation focused; however, it is very important to consider lease events and their timing (break clause, term end, rent review). It could be even more pertinent to keep an eye on lease events during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly where time is of the essence.

A commercial institutional lease may contain an option for a tenant to continue occupation of a property beyond the initial term, along with separate rights of renewal under the 1980/1994

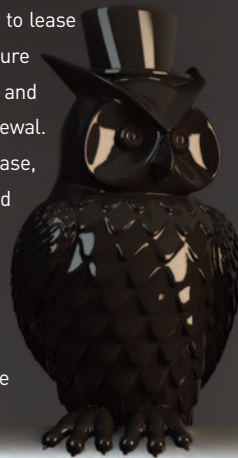
tenants do not know is that renewing a lease and extending a lease are not the same thing

## Lease renewal

A lease that is renewed comes to an end for an instant at the completion of the original term, prior to the renewal term beginning. In that instant one term ends, and a new term begins. In other words, the renewal creates a new lease. Creating a new lease could have unintended consequences to covenants, conditions and obligations within the original lease, most notably the obligation on the tenant to repair and yield up. Based on the premise that a new lease is created via a renewal, it can be deemed that any original tenant alterations or fit-out constructed as part of the previous lease become part of the original building. Come term end of the new lease, a tenant can argue that any previous fit-out is now landlord ownership. This would create a position

extent? Questions could be raised in relation to a tenant's overriding obligation to complete repairs based on lease tenure. An argument could be put forward that a tenant's responsibility for repair should only extend to the term that occurred during the second lease, equivalent to a new term for a new tenant. This is particularly relevant where a five-year renewal is granted post an original 25-year term.

Careful consideration is required to lease wording, and to both parties' future intentions, prior to a landlord and tenant entering a lease renewal. Prior to granting a new lease, agreement could be reached relating to a tenant's existing obligation of repair or yielding up. This agreement could be an extended term, rental offset against dilapidations or schedule



Landlord and Tenant Acts, unless a deed of renunciation was executed at the commencement of the lease. Where renewal options are contained within a lease, they are either an option to renew or an option to extend. What many landlords and

where there is no requirement on a tenant to remove alterations or reinstate the demise back to its original prevailing condition (unless all the parties have expressly agreed otherwise). A tenant would still have an obligation of repair but to what

of dilapidations. Any agreement would be appended or enshrined in a new lease with appropriate wording, as required, concerning future material alterations, licence for work or inflation as part of a settlement claim.

## FEATURE

Andrew Ramsey  
Director, Module



### Lease extension

A lease extension is simply that, an extension to the existing lease. There is no break, and the term does not come to an end. The lease is extended for the additional term without any interruption or modification to the existing tenant and landlord contract. Any tenant alterations to the property remain tenant alterations, with the obligation to yield up remaining intact. The obligations for a tenant to complete repairs as stipulated under the lease continue and there are no misconceptions around obligations. The status quo remains.

A landlord or tenant looking to confirm its position under a lease will need to consider the terms of the relevant lease in question, as each lease will be different. Both parties need to protect their interests, but both parties need to act reasonably.

### Unprecedented opportunities

While it is acknowledged that challenges exist in the current climate, it remains to be seen what opportunities might arise from the Covid-19 pandemic for the property sector and society in general. It presents a time for landlords and tenants to develop their mutually beneficial relationship while protecting their investment and business needs. It creates an opportunity to participate with a lease signed during a different economic outlook. Commercial landlords and tenants need to consider taking all reasonable steps to mitigate losses arising from Covid-19. Landlords may provide rental reductions or rental amnesty for a defined period, with tenants agreeing to relinquish a break option. Both parties may agree an early surrender or an extension to the lease term. Tenants can complete important repairs to property normally occupied by staff, assisting to reduce future dilapidation claims and plan an exit strategy. Opportunities exist to complete a redesign of the workspace to improve and enhance owner-occupied property.

Landlords could sell property following lease surrender upon vacant possession, creating an opportunity for future site development. Opportunities could exist for multiple acquisitions allowing increased site development zones. Vacant property and potential Government grants would allow retrofitting of an asset, which otherwise might not happen. The possibility for a better built environment that is sustainable, utilises less energy, and allows better space configuration, along with universal access, is an exciting prospect.

Most importantly, landlords and tenants contractually bound together need to engage early with each other to try and come to an arrangement that works for all.





# TOWNS AT THE CENTRE

IRELAND'S COLLABORATIVE TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK PROGRAMME IS LOOKING AT HOW BEST TO HELP IRISH TOWN CENTRES TO THRIVE.

Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme, created by The Heritage Council and its partners in 2016, and included in the recent Programme for Government – Our Shared Future (June 2020), aims to establish a collaborative and robust approach to undertaking town centre health checks in Irish towns. The aim is to guide the design, delivery, and evaluation of economic development, regeneration, and investment programmes – both public and private – at various levels. The Programme strongly supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2018-2027: Project Ireland 2040, particularly in relation to the stated National Strategic Outcomes, National Policy Objectives and Strategic Investment Priorities. The NPF (section 1.2), entitled 'Making the Vision a Reality', includes this powerful statement:

"A major new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements will be required, rather than the continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns out into the countryside, at the expense of town centres and small villages..."

Five key pillars are at the heart of the CTCHC Programme, which involves over 70 partner groups and organisations in Ireland and further afield (Figure 1):

- Government Departments and agencies;
- regional assemblies and local authorities;
- third-level organisations and institutes;
- business representative organisations; and,
- civic society/local groups.

## A time of change

The CTCHC Programme is based on the premise that changing demographics and living/travel to work patterns, along with changing consumer preferences and trends, all impact on the vitality and viability of our historic town centres. The Covid-19 pandemic has vastly exacerbated the complex and multifaceted challenges facing town centres. Indeed, many were struggling before the lockdown. Robust data that qualifies and verifies the overall performance of town centres needs to be progressed and upgraded, as part of effective monitoring and evaluation processes and systems. This Programme seeks to close existing data gaps and create innovative partnerships that will ultimately build social capital. Demand for the Programme grew exponentially during its embryonic stage: c.70 people attended the first workshop in Naas (September 2016) and c.130 people attended the second workshop in Dublin (March 2017), a 90% increase. As a result, we created two key programme strands in mid 2018, namely:

1. Border Towns Network (BTN) – the first CTCHC workshop for border towns was held in Monaghan in June 2018, in partnership with Monaghan County Council. A Border Towns CTCHC Workshop Feedback Report<sup>1</sup> was published by The Heritage Council in December 2018. Approximately 60 people attended the first workshop in Monaghan and a second workshop for c. 65 people was held in Dundalk in April 2019. The first Dundalk CTCHC Report had a ministerial launch in June 2019.<sup>2</sup>
2. Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) Towns – the first AEC CTCHC workshop was organised by The Heritage Council in partnership with Mayo County Council and partner Government departments in November 2018. As with the border towns workshop, a feedback report was circulated to all attendees (c. 60) for comment/input before finalisation and publication.

## FEATURE

Ali Harvey  
Founding Co-ordinator,  
CTCHC Programme

## Five key pillars



FIGURE 1:

The five key pillars of the CTCHC Programme.

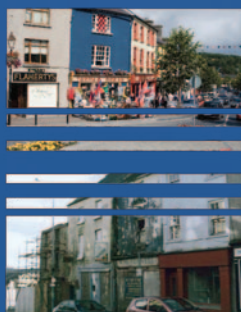
There are 15 towns<sup>3</sup> involved in the CTCHC Programme, with over 70 project partners from the public, private and civic sectors in Ireland and further afield. There are approximately 16 additional towns on a waiting list, mostly in the east of the country. It is anticipated that a strand to service the east of the country will be created once additional resources are made available.

### Survey

The Programme Co-ordinator developed a 15-step survey and assessment process at the outset, which was agreed with all programme partners. This process surveys, measures and maps (using geographic information systems) key quantitative indicators of a town centre's overall performance, including:

- land/building use and vacancy, e.g., retail vacancy rates in Programme towns range from 13.5% to 26%, whereas the target rate in the other EU member states is c. 5%;<sup>4</sup>
- footfall – pedestrian counts and movement patterns;
- consumer perceptions and confidence in these town centres;
- commercial perceptions and confidence – private sector investment plans and priorities, online presence/selling activity; and,
- pattern(s) of land/building ownership, etc.

## Systemic problems and data gaps in Irish towns



© A. Harvey, 2020



FIGURE 2

The Programme has identified three systemic problems and data gaps.

Programme towns have won a number of national awards: the Bank of Ireland Most Enterprising Town in Ireland: Overall National Award was won by Tralee<sup>5</sup> in 2017 and Letterkenny<sup>6</sup> in 2018; and, the KPMG Property Awards: Excellence in Planning Award 2018 was won by Monaghan Town.

### Putting town centres first

Collaboration at an international level is hugely important. The Programme Co-ordinator was invited by the European Commission's (EC) DG GROW (the Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) to present on Ireland's CTCHC Programme in Brussels in February 2019, and to be part of a panel of experts at the Association of Town and City Management's (ATCM) National Conference in London in spring 2019. Ireland's CTCHC Programme has identified three major systemic problems and data gaps, which are impacting on the overall ability of historic town centres to effectively manage the impact of a global pandemic in parallel with changing patterns in living, working, commercial and cultural consumption (Figure 2):

- land use/floorspace and vacancy;
- building condition; and,
- ownership.

Since mid 2019, the Programme has prepared detailed policy submissions on county development plan (CDP) reviews and the ongoing consultation by the Office of the Planning Regulator, about conducting reviews of local authorities' planning performance. All submissions highlight the need for a major policy shift towards putting town centres first. It is hoped that the next Government will embrace this collaborative and sustainable approach to town planning, to ensure that our unique and distinctive town centres can survive and thrive in a vastly uncertain future.

References in text available on request.

# PLANNING PERILS – PART I

PART ONE OF THIS TWO-PART ARTICLE OUTLINES A LEGAL CASE TAKEN UNDER THE AARHUS CONVENTION, WHICH HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS IN IRELAND.

**T**he Aarhus Convention got its name from the city in Denmark where it was signed. It was ratified by Ireland on June 20, 2012, and commenced on September 18, 2012.

The case described here was the first Irish case to be referred to it.

In 1997, a quarry (Keegan Quarries Limited) applied for planning permission to extract limestone from a greenfield site. Meath County Council permitted extraction to a depth of 62m a.O.D. (above ordinance depth) and for a period of 15 years, after which the lands were to be restored. The 15 years expired on August 5, 2012. There had been a lot of compliance and nuisance issues with regard to the quarry and a close eye was being kept for a fresh site notice(s) at the gate of the quarry for any application to extend its life. In September 2012, while logged onto the website of Meath County Council looking for an entirely different planning file, quite by chance I discovered three applications, which were seeking to extend the life of the quarry by five years.

There had not been any site notice. On inquiring about the situation from Meath County Council, I was informed that the public would not be entitled to make observations and was further given to understand that the application was nothing more than a formality. There was no opportunity to put before the planning authority any concerns about the level of planning compliance, nuisance issues or previous unauthorised developments at the site. Furthermore, as there was no opportunity to comment at local authority level, it was not possible to appeal the matter to An Bord Pleanála.

**QUITE BY CHANCE  
I DISCOVERED THREE  
APPLICATIONS,  
WHICH WERE  
SEEKING TO EXTEND  
THE LIFE OF THE  
QUARRY BY FIVE  
YEARS.**



## FEATURE

**Kieran Cummins**  
Solicitor and Secretary,  
Eco Advocacy



### The UNECE & Ireland case: background

The Aarhus Convention of 1998 was a convention on:

a. access to information;

b. public participation in decision-making;  
and,

c. access to justice in environmental matters.



### Misuse of planning?

Following the demise of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy in Ireland, there was a significant amount of unfinished housing development due to a lack of finance. A standard term of five years applies to all residential planning consents, by which time a house or structure must be completed. The Government of the day legislated to provide for an extension of duration of another five years to facilitate people in financial distress. This could be applied for on foot of a simple application and a nominal fee of €62. No public notice or consultation was required (section 42 of the Planning and Development Act 2000). This was, I understood, never intended to be used as a top-up for quarry permissions of a specific duration.

## A STANDARD TERM OF FIVE YEARS APPLIES TO ALL RESIDENTIAL PLANNING CONSENTS, BY WHICH TIME A HOUSE OR STRUCTURE MUST BE COMPLETED.

A process that was introduced to assist financial impecuniosity insofar as it related to construction was in this case being used to circumvent the normal planning process and the authorities had acquiesced to it. (The normal planning process would of course require public consultation together with much greater planning fees and significant environmental information in the form of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report under the EIA Directive and an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive.)

### The case

I prepared a complaint about the matter and lodged it with the United Nations Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee (ACCC), which sits in Geneva a few times per year. The matter was filed in November 2013 and was finally determined in August 2019. The five-year extension of the quarry in question had expired on August 5, 2018, and had to a certain extent become a moot point. Notwithstanding this fact, the quarry had continued to operate after the expiration of its extension.

In summary, the case consisted of:

- a. Initial engagement on preliminary admissibility – the State (Ireland) argued that it was not admissible. Further questions were raised by the ACCC and after a year or so of engagement on that issue the case was admitted.
- b. On March 9, 2016, both parties were invited to attend at the United Nations HQ in Geneva to present their cases and answer further questions from the committee.
- c. The State argued that I should have exhausted all national remedies before referral to the United Nations. I countered that I would have had to risk losing personal property if I failed in a High Court case and that ideally one needed to be a 'man of straw' (not own any property). Both parties were then asked to provide evidence re the high cost of taking High Court proceedings. For its part the State argued that

as all cases were materially different, this was not possible. For my part I had provided evidence of a case (albeit heavily redacted to protect identities). The State strongly contested this and ultimately this was dispensed with and decided on other matters in the final determination.

- d. A preliminary decision was issued on July 1, 2019. Both parties were invited to comment. A final version of the adopted findings of the ACCC was issued on August 19, 2019, and the parties were notified a short time later.
- e. The ACCC eventually found under Article 6 (10): public participation in decisions on specific activities had not been complied with. Article 6 (10) provides that:

"Each Party shall ensure that, when a public authority reconsiders or updates the operating conditions for an activity referred to in paragraph 1, the provisions of paragraphs 2 to 9 of this article are applied *mutatis mutandis*, and where appropriate".

### Main findings with regard to non-compliance

"94. The Committee finds that, by failing to provide opportunities for the public to participate in the decision-making on the 2013 permits to extend the duration of Trammon quarry, the Party concerned has failed to comply with article 6 (10) of the Convention. Moreover, the Committee finds that, by providing mechanisms through which permits for activities subject to article 6 of the Convention may be extended for a period of up to five years without any opportunity for the public to participate in the decision to grant the extension, sections 42 (1) (a) (i) and (ii) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 do not meet the requirements of article 6 (10) and thus the Party concerned fails to comply with article 6 (10) of the Convention."

Part two of this article will be published in the Autumn 2020 edition of the *Surveyors Journal*.

# THE RISE OF LAND RENTAL

THE AGRICULTURAL LAND RENTAL MARKET WAS THE MAIN DRIVER OF ACTIVITY IN 2019, ACCORDING TO THE SCSi/TEAGASC AGRICULTURAL LAND MARKET REVIEW & OUTLOOK 2020 REPORT.

**A**s businesses and society reopen to the new normal of Covid-19, the extent of its impact is yet to be fully assessed. The agricultural sector and its property market is not immune to a dampening of consumer confidence; however, a reminder of just how important the agricultural industry is to our economy was evidenced when it was defined as an “essential service” during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The SCSi/Teagasc Agricultural Land Market Review & Outlook 2020 is based on findings from our SCSi survey, which was conducted nationwide in December and January last. The survey was completed by our membership of surveyors, auctioneers and valuers.

## National average land values from 1970

On a national basis, the average value of agricultural land in 2019 remained generally static at €9,230 per acre, down marginally from 2018. The biggest decline in values occurred in Munster, which recorded a decrease of 9%, compared with Connaught/Ulster, which recorded a 1% decrease on average (Figure 1).

Over the lifetime of this joint report since its first introduction in 2013, land values have increased marginally on a rate-per-acre basis and have certainly not witnessed the high inflationary rates experienced during the Celtic Tiger era. This spike in values during this period is evidenced within a special feature of our 2020 report, which was produced with the assistance of Smith Harrington Auctioneers, who provided average land value data as far back as 1970 (Figures 2 and 3). This will provide our valuers with a reliable dataset for 1974 Capital Gains Tax valuations.

## Land rental market

The rental market in Ireland in the past 12 months remains strong even though beef prices and near drought conditions last year and in 2018 increased costs for farmers. In 2018, across the farm sector, the average family farm income declined by 21%, dropping from €29,774 in 2017 to €23,483, and largely compounded by the extreme and adverse weather conditions experienced. However, average farm incomes increased by up to 7% in 2019, mainly due to increased subsidy payments made to farmers as a response to difficult weather conditions and poor beef prices. According to the joint report, subsidy payments now account for 59% of agricultural sector income, up from 48% in 2018.

According to our report, the continued upward trajectory of land rental values is explained in the increase in farm incomes.

## FEATURE

Edward McAuley  
Head of Practice & Policy, SCSi



## Profile of sellers and renters

### Land leasing

Our auctioneers and valuers report that the percentage of farmers requiring long-term leases is continuing to increase, which shows that the agricultural taxation review conducted in 2014 was a success in moving from the traditional conacre (yearly licence) to more long-term leasing arrangements. This movement towards longer-term leases particularly helps to facilitate new entrants to farming getting access to land to grow crops and farm animals. Land in Ireland transacts once in every 400 years on average so it is a particular challenge for farmers to consolidate their holdings, increase efficiency and invest in their businesses.

### Who is selling land and leasing land?

Generally, probate sales are most active in the marketplace with "landowners inheriting land with no interest in farming it" being the second most active. According to some agents interviewed for the report, probate sales represent a consistent pipeline of work for auctioneers, especially with smaller holdings where the farming unit is simply too small to provide a viable income and where there is nobody in the family to keep the farm running.

### Outlook

Since the publication of this research, the changing economic landscape as a result of the coronavirus means that the land price outlook has become considerably less certain. Beef prices have dipped even further below levels of the cost of production as a result of closed markets, cereal farming is now under severe pressure due to the onset of yet another summer of drought, and milk prices have reduced to levels close to cost of production (c. 0.29c/l). The future of the Common Agricultural Policy and what changes will occur whenever the next review is agreed will significantly govern the future of farming and the impact on land values into the future.

## Key highlights

### 2019 Values € per acre for agricultural land with a residence

#### CONNAUGHT / ULSTER

< 50 ACRES	7,163
50-100 ACRES	6,721
> 100 ACRES	6,416

#### MUNSTER

< 50 ACRES	11,852
50-100 ACRES	10,848
> 100 ACRES	9,763



#### LEINSTER (EXCL. DUBLIN)

< 50 ACRES	10,760
50-100 ACRES	11,504
> 100 ACRES	11,695

### 2019 Values € per acre for agricultural land without a residence

#### CONNAUGHT / ULSTER

< 50 ACRES	7,480
50-100 ACRES	6,376
> 100 ACRES	5,721

#### MUNSTER

< 50 ACRES	10,000
50-100 ACRES	9,832
> 100 ACRES	9,325



#### LEINSTER (EXCL. DUBLIN)

< 50 ACRES	10,734
50-100 ACRES	10,313
> 100 ACRES	9,826

### Rental values € per acre in 2019

#### CONNAUGHT / ULSTER

GRAZING/SILAGE	176
GRAZING ONLY	144
CEREAL CROPS	203
POTATO CROPS	273
OTHER CROPS	186

#### MUNSTER

GRAZING/SILAGE	207
GRAZING ONLY	200
CEREAL CROPS	227
POTATO CROPS	268
OTHER CROPS	273



#### LEINSTER (EXCL. DUBLIN)

GRAZING/SILAGE	183
GRAZING ONLY	170
CEREAL CROPS	210
POTATO CROPS	378
OTHER CROPS	256

FIGURE 1  
Land sales data – highlights.

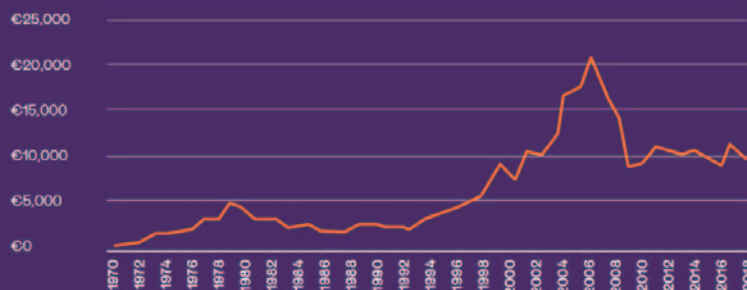


FIGURE 2  
Smith Harrington agricultural land sales price database 1970-2019 (€ rate per acre).  
Source: Smith Harrington Dataset, Meath

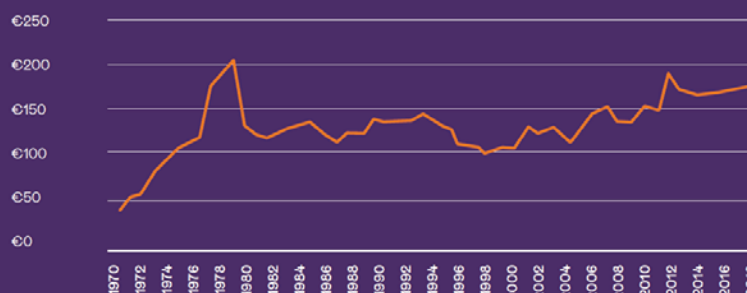


FIGURE 3  
Smith Harrington agricultural land rental price database (€ rate per acre).  
Source: Smith Harrington Dataset, Meath



## 60% INCREASE IN NEW APC APPLICATIONS



Through these unprecedented times, the SCSi has continued to adapt to support those who are preparing for final assessment interviews. Since March, the education team has held weekly online Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) forums, to provide an opportunity for candidates to meet the team, share views, ask questions and gain valuable insights.

Forums have been based on themes such as routes to membership, stages on the journey towards professionalism, recording relevant

experience, and preparing for interview. To complement these live forums, a range of video guides have been developed, which cover the entire life cycle from trainee to professional member. These include useful tips and advice while also providing templates for candidates to follow.

As a result of these endeavours and as a likely consequence of some professionals having time to pause and consider their professional development needs, we have seen a 60% increase in new APC applications in the year to date when compared to 2019. While Covid-19 has brought a host of challenges, this is a very positive development, which will help to secure the future of the profession.

As a further step in the SCSi's digital transformation, and to ensure the safety and well-being of candidates, assessors, monitors and staff, all final assessment interviews for spring/summer 2020 are moving online. Detailed guidance for candidates and assessors has been developed and is being further supported through briefings prior to interviews.

Online interviews may not be feasible for all candidates and assessors, particularly given the additional stress of home working and childcare. With that in mind, any final assessment candidate who does not wish to be assessed online can defer their interview to autumn/winter 2020 without penalty.

Whatever stage you are at in your journey towards professionalism, the SCSi Education Team is there to help. Please contact them at [education@scsi.ie](mailto:education@scsi.ie).

## NEW SCSi FELLOWSHIPS ANNOUNCED

The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland has awarded five new Fellowships in 2020 to members who have achieved distinction in the profession, and are active members of the SCSi. The new Fellows are:

- Tomás Kelly – Aecom – Quantity Surveyor;
- Frank Harrington – TU Dublin – Valuations;
- Liam Daly – Limerick IT – Valuations;
- Michael Boyd – REA Boyd's – Valuations; and,
- Shane O'Beirne – Lisney – Valuations.

The Society Fellowship grade of membership represents a prestigious award that reflects the career achievements of a special group of property and construction professionals. Attaining The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland Fellowship is a true mark of distinction. The SCSi extends its congratulations to these new Fellows.

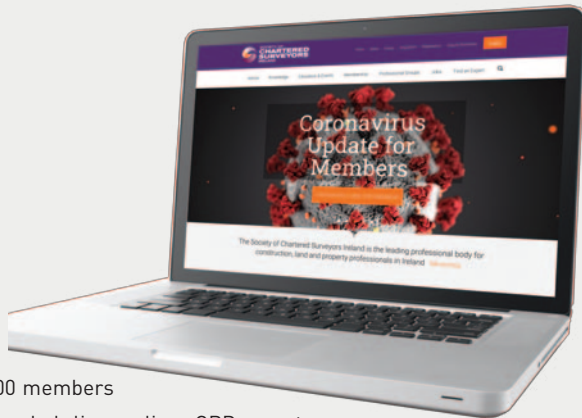
## UPWARDS AND ONWARDS



Congratulations are in order for SCSi President Johanna Gill on her promotion to Deputy Head, Valuation and Advisory Ireland at Cushman & Wakefield. Johanna joined Cushman & Wakefield/DTZ in 2005 and has been instrumental in developing the firm's client base and service delivery over the last 15 years.

Johanna is held in the highest regard by both colleagues and clients due to her knowledge, expertise and pursuit of excellence in all that she does. Her new role comes as she prepares to step down as President of the SCSi after a very successful 15 months. Cushman & Wakefield will undoubtedly benefit from the experience she has gained in that position as she takes up her new position. Everyone in the SCSi wishes Johanna the very best in her new role.

## SOCIETY EVENTS GO ONLINE



Over 3,000 members have attended live online CPD events during the course of the Covid-19 lockdown period. The online delivery has covered a range of topics on how to respond to Covid-19 from a HR, finance, and strategy perspective, as well as its legislative and sectoral impact on their professional work.

The issue of construction contracts and disputes was addressed at two separate CPD events. Jointly, we had 463 attendees for the presentations by Jarleth Heneghan, Partner at William Fry, and Killian Dorney, Partner at Beale & Co. A key message from both was the need by both parties to engage with the goal of getting projects back to work without ending up in court.

In addition to the high level of activity from the Society's Valuation Professional Group, which has informed the many guidance and practice notes to members, there were several CPD events. An online update of the Valuer Registration Scheme was given by Paddy Darmody, while Matt Richardson, CEO of Income Analytics Limited, presented on the importance of income return and how to price the risk of tenant default in a low growth market.

Valerie O'Keeffe shared her '90 Day Plan: An Aide Memoire' (<http://clarityvp.ie/90-day-plan-an-aide-memoire/>) and how members could use it. Valerie assisted members in formulating a strategy for how they could develop an effective 90-day plan in these uncertain times. The conversations and reflections gained have helped other businesses to focus on the services they need to deliver and those they need to pause. From panel discussions to legislative reviews, the CPD events on the impact of the emergency legislation and the lockdown on those involved in residential lettings proved very popular. The level of questions and high-quality answers meant that the various sessions, including owner management company events in partnership with the Housing Agency, nearly all ran slightly over time.

Perhaps more relevant than ever was the sustainability agenda. Talks on this included: 'Net Zero Carbon – what does it mean for commercial real estate?'; 'Developing Climate Change Law'; 'An Introduction to the WELL Building Standard'; '5D BIM Cost Estimate'; 'Dilapidations for non-Building Surveyors'; 'How to Manage your Team Remotely'; and, 'Examinership/Receivership/Liquidation – what's the difference?'. Log in at [www.scsi.ie](http://www.scsi.ie) and click the My Docs & Learning to watch any of these CPD events.

**HOLLIS**

All together  
different

### Every client is different We are too

We're international, independent  
real estate consultants.

Our team brings together  
different experts covering  
every dimension of real estate  
consulting. We all work together  
to help you get more out of your  
real estate.

#### Get in touch:

**Tony Grant**  
Partner, Dublin  
T: +353 87 662 4116  
E: [tony.grant@hollisglobal.com](mailto:tony.grant@hollisglobal.com)

[hollisglobal.com](http://hollisglobal.com)

**SURVEYORS  
ENGINEERS  
TECHNICAL  
SPECIALISTS  
CONSULTANTS  
PROJECT  
MANAGERS  
AND ONE  
STRONG TEAM**

**SCHOOL OF SURVEYING AND  
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT  
BOLTON STREET**

Ireland's longest established  
**SURVEYING SCHOOL**

#### Taught Post Graduate Courses

- MSc Quantity Surveying (Conversion) (part time)
- MSc Real Estate (Conversion) (full time and part time)
- MSc in Geographic Information Science (GIS) (full time and part time)
- MSc in Geospatial Engineering (full time and part time)

For further details contact

**Alan Hore or Martin Hanratty**

School of Surveying and Construction Management  
Bolton Street, Dublin 1

T: +353 (1) 402 3873/3675

T: +353 (1) 402 3994

E: [alan.hore@TUDublin.ie](mailto:alan.hore@TUDublin.ie) / [martin.hanratty@TUDublin.ie](mailto:martin.hanratty@TUDublin.ie)

**T DUBLIN**  
TECHNOLOGICAL  
UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

## MEET THE TEAM IN MERRION SQUARE

### Michelle Smith

Michelle is the Society's new Events and CPD Coordinator, and is responsible for developing and delivering the Society's CPD Programme and creating events for a variety of member audiences.

Michelle has qualifications in event management, marketing, advertising and sales, and is currently studying for a certificate in personal training.

In 2013 Michelle began her events career with Peninsula Ireland. Within two years she was promoted to Events and Marketing Manager, was organising over 100 events a year and seeing the Irish office through a rebrand of all marketing collateral.

After three years working with Peninsula, Michelle decided to take a career break and moved to Melbourne, Australia. During her first year she had a variety of different jobs, one of which was working on a farm. It was in her second year that Michelle landed a role at Stockland, one of the largest diversified property groups in Australia. She spent over a year in Stockland as Sales Coordinator, working closely

with the conveyancing, development and project management teams.

At the end of 2018 Michelle returned to Ireland, working in Fáilte Ireland and the Clayton Hotel Burlington Road before joining the Society in March of this year.

Michelle is very much looking forward to meeting members face to face once back in the office, but until then her focus will be on organising valuable CPD webinars for all members:

"We have had over 6,000 member registrations throughout our CPD webinar programme, which began in mid March, with over 30 topics covered already.

However, we're always on the lookout for new CPD topics, so please do contact us with any suggestions you might have". Michelle's email is [michelle@scsi.ie](mailto:michelle@scsi.ie).



## LIONHEART SEES 40% SPIKE IN CALLS



"We help with all of life's challenges. Obviously, the big one right now is coronavirus," said Juliet Smithson, Head of Operations at LionHeart, at a recent Society webinar on the charity's services for Chartered Surveyors.

LionHeart is the only charity solely dedicated to supporting Chartered Surveyors, past and present, and their families, across the globe. At the webinar, Juliet spoke about the wide range of services available to members, including financial support, health and well-being packages, free professional counselling, work-related support and legal advice, and help if members or their loved ones become seriously ill. She also spoke about how the grant system had been modified to ensure that it was fit for purpose during a period of a temporary gap in work and income for members, and how LionHeart's counsellor service had modified to meet member needs: "Our counsellors are trained in

delivering therapy sessions online. However, since lockdown they have also been offering support to clients via secure email and messaging services, as they have discovered that with more people at home it has sometimes been difficult for their clients to find private space to access sessions".

One of LionHeart's less well known services is their back to work support provided by specialist employment partners. Juliet said that members who use the service get a personalised career coaching session with a specialist. Such a session might include developing your CV, practicing interview techniques, effective job search methods, creating a digital profile and using social media, or help with evaluating career options. In certain cases, this leads to re-skilling when circumstances mean that the individual can't find work in their previous professional area.

LionHeart is supported by member donations, although that's not a requirement to use the service. Barry Smyth, a Society member and LionHeart support representative in Ireland, who has been involved in the Irish support of LionHeart, was the chair of the session. Unfortunately, this year's LionHeart Golf Day, which raises over €10k each year, will not be taking place due to Covid-19 restrictions.

If you'd like a local referral to the LionHeart service, contact [lionheart@scsi.ie](mailto:lionheart@scsi.ie). All queries are confidential and nothing is kept on file. You can request to talk to an SCSi member who is a local representative as well as the LionHeart professional staff. Alternatively, you can contact their helpline directly at +44 121 289 3300 or email [info@lionheart.org.uk](mailto:info@lionheart.org.uk).



# BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY

KRISTYNA RAWICZ'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY EXTENDS RIGHT ACROSS HER PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE.

**K**RA Visionary Project Partners works mainly with commercial clients, focusing on building surveying and project management. Founding Director Krystyna Rawicz and her colleagues have also long been interested in sustainability, and launched sister company KRA Renewables in 2017 to offer solutions to existing and new clients looking to start their own sustainability journey.

## Finding the right solution

Because the right solution is different for every building, Krystyna and her colleagues take an individual approach, which draws on core surveying skills: "We ask what makes sense with this building, with the fabric, with the roof. It's based on those relationships of trust with clients who value your professional advice, which every surveyor will recognise. You're able to bring a rounded, coherent picture to the client who may have thought about doing something, but doesn't know how".

It's about starting a conversation, she says: "If we're doing a building survey, we might mention that there are things that would make the building more energy efficient, and if they're interested in pursuing this, we can advise them further".

She gives as an example ongoing work that KRA is doing for Nissan, which began with just such a conversation and has led to a programme of work including retrofitting Nissan's Park West headquarters with rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, installing electric vehicle (EV) chargers, and implementing water-saving measures. The building is now generating 40% of its electricity needs, thus making significant savings. This is a powerful incentive for firms that might be unsure about the initial, often significant, investment involved.

## Sustainability in house

KRA also applies this message closer to home, from working with the management company that runs their own head office to improve the industrial estate by adding solar PV, increased planting on verges, and even beehives, to supporting environmental charities. Krystyna has also completed a Certificate in Business Sustainability with the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Management, and the company is working to get LEED Green Associate Accreditation. Ultimately, these skills will be crucial to surveying in the future: "As senior property professionals, clients come to us for advice that is slightly outside our core areas. It's our obligation to know the answers or to be able to find the answers and advise the client properly. We encourage all of our employees to upskill in sustainability. It's not a 'nice to have' – you have to upskill".



## Unusual beginnings

After completing a degree in modern history and economics, a desire to work with people led Krystyna to Birmingham City Housing Department as a graduate trainee building surveyor. In Birmingham she worked across different departments from finance to health and safety, while studying part-time for a degree in building surveying. She stayed in Birmingham for a number of years before moving to Ireland in 1994 as Head of the Building Surveying Department at Hamilton Osborne King (now Savills), before leaving in 2000 to set up KRA. In her spare time, Krystyna spends time with her four children and two grandchildren, reads, grows vegetables, walks the dog and has recently taken up beekeeping.

Krystyna's personal passion on this issue is very evident: "We are using up the Earth's resources on an unsustainable level. I have to do what I can. I've installed solar PV on my house. I grow my own veg. We can't all live in sackcloth, but we can try and make conscious decisions and be as sustainable as possible".

## SURVEYOR PROFILE

Ann-Marie Hardiman  
Managing Editor,  
Think Media



# PRETTY VACANT?

IS THE VACANT SITE TAX AN EFFECTIVE TOOL OR A BLUNT INSTRUMENT?

# W

hen the so-called 'vacant site tax' was first introduced via the

Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, it aimed to increase the supply of land for much-needed housing by introducing a financial penalty for suitably zoned sites that were not brought forward for development.

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 made some amendments:

- levy increased from 3% to 7%;
- clarification re: "vacant or idle" lands – exemption for certain residentially zoned land being used for farming; and,
- removal of reduced/zero rates of levy (where a mortgage or loan exceeds the valuation).

## Loopholes

One of the aims of the 2018 Act was to close a perceived loophole whereby a site could avoid being labelled vacant or idle if used for non-residential purposes (i.e., farming). A suitably zoned site would now be liable for the levy where it was being used for a purpose other than the provision of housing. However, the tax was only applicable where the most recent purchase of the land occurred after it became zoned.

## THE LAST WORD

Niall Brereton  
Director, Professional Services  
Department, Bannon



Consequently, a considerable number of landowners, such as farmers and religious orders, benefited from this provision and were excluded from local councils' vacant site registers. Some 60% of all sites on local authority registers were removed.

## Local authorities

Figures compiled by *The Irish Times* in January 2020 indicated that eight out of 31 local authorities across Ireland did not include any vacant sites on their registers. Dublin City Council's register has 62 sites on it as at February 2020, 15 of which list the Council itself as the owner. The overall cumulative tax liability from all vacant sites currently on the register within the Dublin City Council administrative area is approximately €7.9 million. However,

Dublin City Council itself is liable for €5.6m or 71% of this. The Council owns the three most valuable sites on the register, which attract an annual liability of just under €5m. Therefore, the very purpose of the levy, to allow local authorities to fund the provision of housing, has become a drain on the financial resources of the local authority with the largest population in the State.

The European Commission Country Report for Ireland 2020 stated that the vacant site levy "might require some refinement to increase its effectiveness", with a number of local authorities reporting difficulties in interpreting the law and identifying vacant sites. Therefore, it is likely that the vacant site tax and its implementation may be subject to further reform during the tenure of the new coalition Government.



# PROPERTY IN THE IRISH TIMES



Ph: 01-6758585 | [irishtimes.com](http://irishtimes.com)

**THE IRISH TIMES**  
YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ





THANK YOU  
ESSENTIAL WORKERS

