



Surveyors urge government to introduce stimulus package for construction sector immediately

Unemployment rate amongst surveyors up 12.5% so far this year

Friday, October 16th 2009. The President of the Society of Chartered Surveyors has called on the government to introduce anti-recession stimulus measures for the construction sector without delay.

SCS President Ken Cribbin highlighted the fact that at its peak, the construction industry employed over 380,000 people (18% of total employment in Ireland). This figure included electricians, carpenters, plumbers, general labourers as well as surveyors, engineers and architects. By the end of 2009, employment in this sector is expected to have halved.

Cribbin made the call as new figures from the Society showed that so far this year unemployment among surveyors has increased by 12.5% overall while the figure for graduate surveyors is at 27% and expected to rise to 40% by the end of the year. The figures are based on responses to a survey from the SCS from 220 of its member surveying firms around the country.

Cribbin, who is hosting the 10th Annual Conference of the SCS at UCD's O'Reilly Hall today, said the most worrying aspect of the present situation was the fact that a number of major infrastructure projects are due to be completed in the first half of 2010 and there are precious few projects in the pipeline. "Due to the lack of new orders over the past year, construction output volumes are forecast to decline by 52.5% which means volumes by the end of 2011 will be back to where they were at in the mid-1990s. If we do not get this stimulus package an additional 100,000 jobs in the construction sector are threatened. This will add to the increasing burden of the social welfare bill on the State and lead to a deepening of the recession in construction.

“The UK and US governments have brought forward innovative stimulus packages aimed at improving their infrastructure and maintaining employment. But here the government seems to be curtailing key infrastructural programmes instead of expanding such them.” Cribbin said.

Tender price figures released recently by the SCS showed that building prices are now down at levels last seen a decade ago. The SCS, along with its fellow members of the Construction Industry Council, believes that if the government acted decisively it could;

- Manage and maintain employment in the industry and save over 70,000 jobs
- Ensure construction skills and expertise remain in Ireland, thereby avoiding a repeat of the ‘brain-drain’ last seen in the 1980’s
- Provide badly needed public infrastructure at excellent value for money
- Improve national competitiveness along with wider societal benefits.

Ken Cribbin pointed out that in most EU countries the construction industry represents 12% of GDP while in Ireland, due to our infrastructural deficit it should be closer to 15%.

“If we continue on the path we are on without government intervention we will reach 8% of GDP by 2011. That is a place we don’t want to go. We want to be able to tell our members – and indeed young people considering a career in surveying – that yes we are going through a difficult period, but we will pull through it in a couple of years and we will need to be ready for the upturn. That’s what we want to be able to say to them. And not just to say but to believe. The government needs to make it happen now.” Cribbin concluded.

For more Information

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