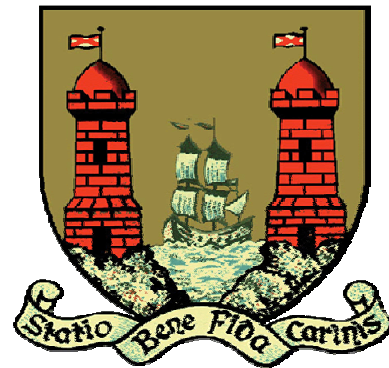


# Cork Economic Monitor

---

April 2005



**Cork City Council**

Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí

---

**Planning and Development Directorate  
Navigation House, Albert Quay East, Cork**

Tel: 021 492 4086  
e-mail: [planning@corkcity.ie](mailto:planning@corkcity.ie)

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1.0 National Trends.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.0 Local Trends.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Unemployment.....	3-4
2.2 Commercial Property.....	5-6
2.3 Housing.....	7-10
2.4 Infrastructure.....	11-16
<b>3.0 Urban Renewal.....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 City Regeneration Projects.....	17
3.2 Cork Docklands Development.....	17
3.3 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme.....	17-19
3.4 Living Over The Shop.....	19-20
3.5 RAPID Programme.....	20-21
3.6 Promoting Development.....	21-22
<b>4.0 Overall Prospects.....</b>	<b>23</b>

## 1.0 National Trends

The Irish economy resumed on a relatively strong growth path in 2004 and is currently one of the fastest growing economies in the developed world. It constitutes around 1.8% of the overall output of the Euro Zone. The open nature of the economy is reflected both in the international mobility of labour and capital reflected by strong migratory flows and high levels of foreign direct investment.

The strong performance of the economy in 2004 and the first quarter of 2005 are best exemplified by employment growth of 3% last year (or 54,400 net job increases) with an average unemployment rate of 4.5%. According to ESRI figures, Irish GNP volumes are estimated to have reached 5.1% in 2004, their highest rates since the peak of 2000, with a corresponding increase in GDP of 5.6%. The higher than projected growth rates are due largely to a very strong construction output growth, with many other variables, such as consumer spending and exports, broadly in line with expectation.

All available data suggest that the Irish labour market is very healthy and continuing to show positive signs of expansion. Following an exceptionally strong employment growth of 3% last year, the ESRI predict labour market conditions to remain robust both this year and next. Irish output growth forecasts for 2005 are favourable against the backdrop of reasonably robust, if somewhat unbalanced, global economic prospects. Growth in 2005 is forecast to be 5.7% in real GDP and 5.0% for real GNP. Similarly, unemployment rates are set to stabilise to an average 4.3% in both 2005 and 2006.

The rapid growth in the economy and the weakness in the Euro exchange rate led to price inflation in Ireland rising significantly to well over double the rate of the Euro area in the past number of years. However, lower growth, a stronger currency together with the need to regain lost competitiveness has led to moderation of price increases in more recent years. The pace of inflation as measured by the consumer price index moderated during 2004 with the latest available statistics indicating price growth of 2.7% for the year to October 2004. According to the ESRI's Quarterly Economic Commentary (Spring 2005), inflation in consumer prices is expected to average 2.3% in 2005.

Irish living standards, as measured by a metric such as output per capita in purchasing power terms, is ranked among the top four countries globally by the OECD. While this is correct when using GDP figures, which is inclusive of foreign multinational activities, the more appropriate indicator of Irish incomes is GNP. The adjustment to GNP figures, however, would still rank Ireland at a credible 15<sup>th</sup> position. Living standards as captured by Irish real gross national disposable incomes, calculated in part by trade movements and capita transfers from abroad, are estimated to have grown by 3.7% in 2004. With the strong employment growth last year the rise in living standards per person employed was quite modest.

The public finances remain in a strong and sustainable position. Tax investigations, counter balanced by expenditure contingencies related to the uncertain costs of re-imburement of long-term care patients, are expected to move the General Government Balance from a surplus of 1.3% of GDP in 2004 to forecast deficits of 0.6% in 2005.

## 2.0 Local Trends

### 2.1 Unemployment

Table 2.1 shows the number of persons on the live register for Metropolitan Cork during the period 1996 - March 2005. In the time period from September 1996, when the Live Register was at its peak in Metropolitan Cork (22,257 persons), to March 2005 there has been a 56% decrease in the number of persons on the Live Register. The numbers of unemployed have been relatively stable since late 2003, and figures revealed from November 2004 to March 2005 seem to follow this trend.

**Table 2.1. Live Register 1996-2005 Metropolitan Cork**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Persons on Live Register</b>
December	1996	21,294
December	1997	18,526
December	1998	14,729
December	1999	11,317
December	2000	9,193
December	2000	9,193
December	2001	10,743
December	2002	11,072
December	2003	10,754
March	2004	10,589
June	2004	10,875
September	2004	10,313
December	2004	9,451
<b>January</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>10,045</b>
<b>February</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>9,794</b>
<b>March</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>9,828</b>

Between March 2004 and March 2005 the number of people on the Live Register in Metropolitan Cork decreased by 7.1% (761 persons) as indicated in Table 2.1 above. These compare well both regionally and nationally. During the same period there was a 5.2% (1,240 persons) decrease recorded in the SouthWest Region and a 6.6% (11,205 persons) decrease nationally.

**Table 2.2 Classification by age and sex of Live Register 2004-2005: Metropolitan Cork**

	<b>Met. Cork (Mar 04)</b>	<b>Met. Cork (Mar 05)</b>	<b>Met. Cork % Change</b>	<b>The State (Mar 04)</b>	<b>The State (Mar 05)</b>	<b>State % Change</b>
<b>MALE</b>	<b>6,639</b>	<b>6,180</b>	<b>-6.9%</b>	<b>99,692</b>	<b>92,786</b>	<b>-6.9%</b>
<b>under 25</b>	1,188	1,113	-6.3%	18,983	17,659	-6.9%
<b>over 25</b>	5,451	5,076	-6.8%	80,709	75,127	-6.9%
<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>3,950</b>	<b>3,648</b>	<b>-7.6%</b>	<b>69,188</b>	<b>64,889</b>	<b>-6.2%</b>
<b>under 25</b>	885	755	-14.6%	13,778	12,734	-7.5%
<b>over 25</b>	3,065	2,893	-5.6%	55,410	52,155	-5.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,589</b>	<b>9,828</b>	<b>-7.1%</b>	<b>168,880</b>	<b>157,675</b>	<b>-6.6%</b>

Table 2.2 gives a detailed breakdown of the overall figures from March 2004 - March 2005 by age and sex, comparing them to the national average in percentage terms. In the year leading to March 2005 the number of persons on the Live Register decreased nationally by 6.6%. The Metropolitan Cork Area experienced a fall in unemployment, which significantly outstripped both the regional and State average. The South West Region recorded a 5.2% decrease in numbers on the live register in the year leading to March 2005 while Metropolitan Cork recorded very encouraging figures of 7.1%. Overall, there has been a drop in numbers on the Live Register of 6,906 persons nationally. While all categories compare very favourably to both regional and national figures the breakdown of this overall decrease varies. In particular the numbers of females on the live register in the Metropolitan Cork area dropped significantly by over 7.6% compared to a 6.9% drop in figures for males.

## 2.2 Commercial Property

Commercial property returned growth of 11.5% in 2004, according to Bank of Ireland's most recent Quarterly (March 2005 Irish Property Review) data and as such outperformed residential for the first time since 2000. The retail sector continues to be the principle performer in the commercial sector of the Irish economy, underpinned by steady consumer spending and demand for sites from foreign companies wishing to get some exposure on the Irish High Street. In Cork City, retail remains the strongest activity sector. Various retail transactions have seen City Centre retail rents rise to in excess of €4,200 per sq.m. on St. Patrick Street. The Cornmarket Street site (Guys) now has planning permission for retailing. This, along with the acquisition by O' Callaghan Properties of a group of properties at Academy Street and Emmet Place will release new retail space into the core as both are zoned as "Higher Order Retail" in the current City Development Plan 2004. In addition, an application has just been lodged to replace the existing Capital Cinema with a mixed-use scheme including a Department Store on ground, first and second floors. The development of City Quarter at Lapps Quay and development at Lavitt's Quay further highlights a renewed focus in development of the city centre.

Significant public realm improvements in the City Centre along with the completion of the main drainage scheme has added to the attractiveness of the City Centre as a retail location and has ensured continuous demand for City Centre retail space during 2005. As can be seen from the survey results given in Table 2.4 below, vacancy levels on the City's primary retailing streets continued to fall in 2004 and early 2005.

In the suburbs retail activity is similarly strong. Development at Mahon Point is now complete and open since February 2005. The Douglas Village Shopping centre was recently granted planning permission for a major extension and all of the additional 11 no. units granted permission at Wilton Shopping Centre are let to capacity. Outside of the City, the recent commencement of construction at the new Ballincollig Town Centre has further strengthened the suburban retail market. Mixed use proposals in the Blackpool Valley are partially complete on the Polefield Site with a number of retail warehousing units now open providing additional choice for northside shoppers. Other significant retail warehousing units are also complete in Mahon and at the Kinsale Road.

A series of new office developments are coming on stream in the City Centre, including Lapps Quay. There was over 4,000 sq m office floorspace granted permission between January 2005 to March 2005, with a further 16,00 sq m pending decision. These are largely located in the Commercial Core Area. Demand for smaller industrial units continues to remain strong within the wider Metropolitan Area .

On the hotel front in Cork there has been significant activity. A new 200-bed hotel is now open on Lapp's Quay, while Shandon Court is also undergoing refurbishment and expansion. A new hotel is also planned as part of the Mahon Point project with further hotel schemes planned at Crosses Green and South Mall/Beasley Street. Significant redevelopment works are also awaiting approval from An Bord Pleánala on its Western Road site while the Kingsley Hotel are also currently undertaking significant expansion of their hotel in the Western City site.

Over the past number of years a survey of available vacant office space in selected areas of the City has been carried out as well as a survey of vacant ground floor retail space on St. Patrick's Street and Oliver Plunkett Street. The findings of this year's survey, together with those of previous surveys are given in Table 2.4 below.

**Table 2.4 Office and Retail Space – Selected Streets**

Year	Vacant Office Space to Let (Sq. m.)				Vacant Retail Space Ground Floor (Sq. m.)	
	South Mall	Grand Parade	South Tce.	George's Quay	St. Patrick's Street	Oliver Plunkett Street
1992	3,640.3	-	780.3	1,456.5	-	-
1994	5,152.2	1,307.1	1,405.1	-	-	-
1995	4,375	1,338.2	445.9	1,189.1	598.6	-
1996	4,218.3	1,300.5	236.4	-	1,730.9	-
1997	817.5	-	92.9	399.4	509.7	-
1998	2,138.8	63.1	74.3	418	212.2	360
1999	399.4	1,068.3	204.3	557.4	329.7	359
2000	538.8	-	371.6	278.7	111.2	250.8
2001	1,514.2	-	1,100.1	-	-	253.6
2002	816	-	696.7	-	761.7	173.3
2003	2,014.4	-	1,373.4	751.7	260.9	506
2004	1,861.5	950	1,292.9	1,560.7	166.3	708.3
<b>April 2005</b>	<b>1416</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1303</b>	<b>1161</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>81</b>

Vacant office space to let on the South Mall has fallen this year, proving resilient against the spate of new office floorspace elsewhere in the city. The overall level of available office space has fallen since 2004 figures.

There have been significant cosmetic improvements undertaken to individual buildings on most streets, in line with public realm upgrades. The survey also shows a significant drop in vacant retail space on Oliver Plunkett Street with only two premises currently vacant at ground floor level. Both of these have attracted considerable interest of late. While vacancy levels have risen on St. Patrick Street, a large percentage of these premises are either due for renovation or reoccupation shortly.

## 2.3 Housing

### 2.3.1 Local Authority Housing Construction

**Table 2.3 Local Authority Housing Construction in Cork City**

Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Units	36	39	118	79	106	82	100	63	53	72	108	141	138

In 2004 a total of 138 Social and Affordable units were completed between January and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2004. A further 90 units were purchased in this period giving a total of 228 social units. Affordable housing units constructed during this period amounted to 44, with a further 99 units under construction. Table 2.4 below shows Social Housing schemes that are currently in progress, totalling 96 units. In addition to these schemes a number of “turnkey” schemes are currently under construction. These are outlined in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.4 Social Housing Schemes in Progress**

Scheme	Number of Units	Estimated Completion Date
Glen Infill / Regeneration 1	48	Spring 2005
5 & 6 Ballymacthomas Street	4	Spring 2005
21 Chapel Street & No. 1 John Philpott Curran Street	2	January 2005
Shandon	35	February 2005
St. John’s Well	7	February 2005
	<b>Total 96</b>	

**Table 2.5 Turnkey Social Housing Schemes in Progress**

Scheme	Number of Units	Stage of Construction
Seminary Road	31	Works Commenced
Mount St. Joseph’s Phase II	30	Work On-going
Sunvalley Drive II	8	Work On-going
Glenfields, Ballyvolane	109	Work Completed
Baker’s Road	18	Completed March 2004
Willowbank Phase II	52	Completed September 2004
Casey’s Land	100	Work On-going
Regina Mundi	39	Work On-going
Berlingford Drive	56	Work On-going
	<b>Total 443</b>	

There are 6 no. Social and Affordable schemes currently in the course of planning totalling 220 units. The largest of these schemes are at Susie’s Field, Blackpool (110 units). Part VIII has recently been approved for same. A builder has recently been appointed for other Part VIII schemes in the Boreenmanagh Road (50 units) and Turners Cross (18 units). Contractors are due

to be signed for a scheme at Deerpark (32 units) and a contractor has been appointed for Rimgmahon House (6 units). Finally, a revised scheme is currently being designed for the Mahon Infill II scheme totalling 10 Units.

The most recent available figures outlines that Cork City Council have a total housing stock of 7,853 units of accommodation. The number of vacancies within the Local Authority stock totals 361 units. The absolute number of applicants on the housing list has increased to 4,766, up 403 applicants on figures contained in the October 2004 Economic Monitor.

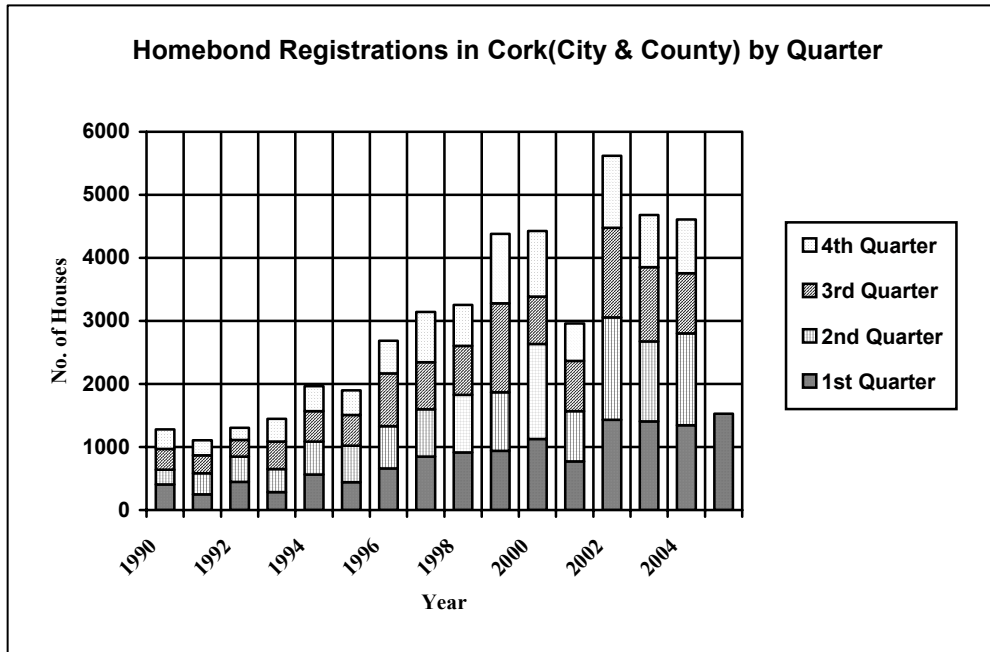
### **2.3.2 Voluntary Housing Schemes**

In 2004 17 voluntary units were completed. There are a large number of schemes currently in progress in the first quarter of 2005, totalling 186 units. Information available from the DoELG Housing Statistics Bulletin reveal a total of 40 units in Cork City were being funded under the Capital Loan & Subsidy in 2004. The same period last year recorded a total of 141 units in progress with Capital Assistance Scheme funding.

### **2.3.4 New House Registrations**

This section details the number of new houses registered under a building guarantee product: HomeBond or Premier Guarantee (since 2002). While not all new houses are registered under a building guarantee product, these figures serve as a useful indicator of future house building activity. Figure 2.3 below shows HomeBond registrations for both Cork City and County since 1990 (separate figures for the City are not available).

Figures for 2004, while slightly below 2003 figures, are still significantly above the figures for 2001. In 2004 there were 4607 Homebond house registrations in Cork. Figures available for the first quarter of 2005 reveal a positive trend (1529 registrations) surpassing all figures for the same period since 2002.



**Figure 2.3 New House Registrations (HomeBond)**  
Source: Home Bond

### 2.3.5 House Prices

Nationally house prices grew by 8.6% in 2004, according to the latest edition of the *Permanent TSB House Price Index*. This compares to annual growth of 13.3% and 13.8% for 2002 and 2003 respectively. Nationally, house prices grew by 0.2% in December last, bringing growth for the last three months of 2004 to 0.8%. Figures highlight a significant slow-down to those of the same period in 2003, which recorded a rise in house prices of 1.4% in December 2003 and growth of 3.9% in the last three months of 2003.

There were significant variations in the rate of price growth in different parts of the country, however. While Cork County and Donegal experienced the fastest rate of price growth at 16%, Cork City had an equally impressive increase of 13% on 2003 figures. The average national house price in December was €254,215, with average figures in Cork City reaching €276,267. The equivalent price in December 2003 was €234,066 (nationally) and €243,766 (Cork City).

Demand in the Cork City residential market continue to remain strong for the first time buyer market and forecasts predict this will translate into price increases of 5 –10% in this sector over the next 12 months. There is very significant demand for the upper end of the second hand housing market with a shortage of supply of houses in excess of €700,000.

Statistics issued from Permanent TSB’s National House Price Index, illustrated in Tables 2.6, reflect the average new house prices from 1996 to the last quarter of 2004. The rate of growth of new house prices since 2003 in Cork City (13%) was significantly higher than the national average at 8.6%. This compares with a rate of growth nationally of 13.3% and 13.8% for 2002 and 2004 respectively.

**Table 2.6 Average House Prices**

Area	1996	2002	2003	2004	Growth % '03 – '04
<b>Cork</b>	€76,855	€200,528	€243,766	€276,267	13%
<b>Dublin*</b>	€92,342	€272,671	€307,343	€334,822	9%
<b>Galway</b>	€92,588	€215,268	€240,831	€267,920	11%
<b>Limerick</b>	€72,940	€179,753	€199,092	€217,208	9%
<b>Waterford</b>	€64,609	€179,822	€202,494	€229,873	14%
<b>State</b>	€	€	€234,066	€254,215	8.6%

Source: Permanent TSB House Price Index

\* Dublin city and county combined index prices

### **2.3.6 Housing Units Granted**

A total of 185 houses (excluding one-offs) and 828 apartments were granted by Cork City Council in 2004. While these figures were down on those recorded in the same period of 2003 (260 no. houses; 913 apartments), apartments continued to outperform conventional housing units. This trend is set to continue due to a combination of factors; namely the drop in household size plus the lack of available development land which is forcing higher densities to meet current demand.

## **2.4 Infrastructure**

### **2.4.1 Capital of Culture Projects**

The City Council has prepared a programme of capital projects with a focus on the City's designation as European Capital of Culture in 2005. Many of these projects relate to art, culture and tourism promotion while others relate to public infrastructure and community facilities. The programme represents a total capital investment of €196 million of which €67 million must come from the City Council's own resources. Some of the projects include:

#### **(a) Sustainable City Campus - Lifetime Lab**

Restoration of Cork City's old public waterworks buildings commenced in August 2004 and the complex (to be known as Sustainable City Campus - Lifetime Lab) is expected to be open to the public in June 2005. The total cost of the project is approx. €8.5 millions, and funding has been provided by the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Cork City Council and University College Cork.

Sustainable City Campus - Lifetime Lab comprises 5 main elements: A Visitor Centre, comprising a Theatre and Exhibition Spaces; a Steam and Industrial Heritage Centre; an Environment Information Centre; a Schools Resource Centre and a Green Electricity Generation facility.

#### **(b) Courthouse, Washington Street**

The complete refurbishment and enhancement of the City Courthouse in Washington Street is now complete. The project was completed in twenty months and was opened to coincide with Cork's reign as European Capital of Culture. Funding for the project, which cost a total of €26.5 million, was secured from the Courts Service.

#### **(c) Writer / Artists in Residence**

The former home of the late Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, at Shandon has been refurbished as a residence for visiting writers or artists who come to live in the City on a short-term basis. It is available since January 2005 with the cost of €250,000 being provided by the City Council.

#### **(d) Blackrock Castle**

Work on the €4 million restoration of Blackrock Castle in Cork is nearing completion. Cork City Council has confirmed it is shortly to seek tenders for a franchise operator to run an astronomy centre and a restaurant and pub at the site. Specialists have been engaged on site to advise on the most appropriate layout for an exhibition area in the castle, which will feature the astronomy centre.

## **2.4.2 Infrastructure / Road Schemes**

### **(a) St. Patrick Street**

September 2004 saw the completion of the Urban Landscape and Refurbishment Works to St. Patrick Street. This scheme commenced in mid-2002 and cost a total of €13m. This scheme has now been extended to now include all of Grand Parade. Phase 1 of Grand Parade re-paving works are due for completion mid 2005.

### **(b) City Centre Streets**

Cork Main Drainage works have been largely completed in the City Centre and extensive reinstatement and paving work have been undertaken during 2004 with further works due for completion in 2005. Repaving work has been completed on French Church Street, Carey's Lane and in Rory Gallagher Place.

### **(c) Oliver Plunkett Street Redevelopment**

The repaving of Oliver Plunkett Street and a number of adjacent streets is underway and is due to be completed in May 2005.

### **(d) Shandon Street, Phase II Works**

Tenders have gone out for Phase II of public realm improvement works in Shandon Street. Works are anticipated to begin in June 2005.

### **(f) Water Street Bridge**

The feasibility study and Environmental Impact Statement for the Water Street Bridge is due for completion shortly. The bridge will connect the North and South Docks and constitutes a significant part of the infrastructural improvements outlined in the *Docklands Development Strategy*.

### **(g) Watercourse Road**

Work commenced in late 2002 on the upgrading of the Watercourse Road, which consists of an Urban Landscaping and Traffic Management / Traffic Calming Scheme. The total estimated cost of this scheme is in the order of €4m. It is hoped to complete this scheme by mid 2005.

### **(h) Kinsale Road Interchange**

A grant of €20m from the National Roads Authority has been received for this work. Work is to commence on site in May 2005.

### **(i) Green Routes**

First identified in CASP, green routes will be high-quality, high-profile public transportation routes into the City Centre, focused on the objective of moving large numbers of people instead of vehicles. Bus lanes and other measures will be implemented to improve priority for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians. Work is completed on the No. 8 Bus Route and is underway

on the No. 6 Bus Route from Douglas to the City Centre with a number of other routes at various stages of planning.

### **2.4.3 Water Schemes**

#### **(a) Cork Water Conservation Scheme: Phase One**

An ongoing active leakage control programme is in place.

#### **(b) Lee Road Waterworks Improvement**

An Bord Pleánala approved an Abstraction Order. Funding is currently being sought from the DoEHLG for additional consultation under the public private partnership process.

#### **(c) Rising Mains**

The DoEHLG has approved a preliminary report. A consultants brief for detailed design and construction is currently being prepared. This will be sent to the DoEHLG for approval.

#### **(d) Tivoli Industrial Estate Firemain**

This scheme has been revised. Contract documents will be sent to the DoEHLG shortly (May 2005).

#### **(e) Cork Water Conservation Scheme: Phase Two**

Contract documents have been sent to the DoEHLG and approval of the preliminary report is now awaited.

#### **(f) Schemes submitted to the DoEHLG**

The following schemes have been submitted to the DoEHLG for approval and funding:

- (i) Provision of a stand-by generator to the Lee Road Waterworks.
- (ii) Construction of a storage reservoir at Rochestown.

#### **(g) Strategic Water Plan**

Consultants have commenced the preparation of a Strategic Water Plan for Cork County Council's Southern Division and Cork City Council's area. A final Report is expected by June 2005.

#### **(h) Docklands Redevelopment**

€10 million has been allocated for Water and Drainage Schemes in the Docklands area under the *Water Services Investment Programme 2004 –2006*. A Feasibility Report has been prepared regarding water supply to the Docklands development area. The Report recommends short term and long-term supply solutions for water supply to the Docklands. A Preliminary Report is to be prepared for DoEHLG approval.

#### **(i) Additional Reservoir Storage**

A design brief for Shanakiel Reservoir is now being prepared. This will be sent to the DoELG for approval. A report on an Intermediate level reservoir is currently being finalised by Cork City Council.

### **2.4.4 Cork Main Drainage**

The Cork Main Drainage Scheme is now fully completed. All discharges of foul sewage to the River have been intercepted and taken to the new WasteWater Treatment Plant where it receives treatment. The treated effluent from the Plant has been to a very high standard since January 2004, easily complying with the EU Wastewater Directive.

### **2.4.3 Amenity Projects**

#### **(a) Link Point, Knocknaheeny**

Cork City Council in association with City of Cork VEC proposes to construct a 'Link Point', a single storey complex incorporating meeting rooms, activity rooms and offices to cater for the youth in the Knocknaheeny area in the grounds of the Terence McSwiney College. The project is costed at €1.2 million, with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs through the Young Peoples Facilities and Services fund providing the majority of funding. Part VIII procedures have been approved by Council and is due to proceed to tender in December 2004.

#### **(b) Sam Allen Sports Centre, Churchfield**

Two new pitches are currently being constructed at the Sam Allen Sports Centre at Knockfree Avenue, Churchfield which is managed by Leisureworld.

#### **(c) New City Archives**

Work is due to commence on the building of a new City Archive, to be situated to the rear of the former fire station on Great William O'Brien Street. The two-storey building will have archive storage rooms on both floors, exhibition/lecture space, reading and research area, offices, toilets etc. on the ground floor.

#### **(d) Banks of the Lee Project**

The Mardyke Pedestrian Bridge is in place and will be fully complete shortly. The path linking the Mardyke to the bridge is under construction and will also be complete shortly. Work is due to commence on the path on the northern bank of the river in early May. This path will complete the link through to the North Mall. This work is being done in co-operation with University College Cork and Mercy University Hospital. It is expected that the walkway will be completed

and open in July 2005.

The walkway at the riverside of the Kingsley Hotel is being upgraded in conjunction with the development at the Kingsley. An extension to the works has been agreed which will see the river parapet railing continued into the Lee Fields. This work is due for completion by May. Construction of a bridge to link across the southern channel of the river Lee to the east of the Kingsley is on temporary hold until some land related matters are resolved.

**(e) Library, Tory Top Road**

A new library is under construction at Tory Top Road. The library will be a state of the art facility of 1,000 sq. metres approx.

**(f) Mahon Park**

Work is ongoing in Mahon Park. The perimeter railing has been completed, public lighting installed but awaiting activation by the ESB. The path network is due to be surfaced by the end of May and some paving works are also in hand. The Children's playground will be installed in May 2005. Work will then commence on a car park area adjoining Skehard Road.

**(g) Glenamoy Lawn, Mayfield**

Work is ongoing on the construction of a new park at Glenamoy Lawn. The perimeter railing has been completed, including raising the height of adjoining garden walls. Extensive works were carried out in the immediate vicinity of the park including upgrading the steps to Glencree Crescent to make them more user friendly, and constructing a path to the outside of the park railing. Internally, the path network has been laid out and will be ready for tarmacadam surfacing by the end of April. Work is to start in mid April on the installation of a children's playground.

**(h) Churchfield Swimming Pool**

Work on the construction of a new swimming Pool and leisure centre in Churchfield began in March 2004, and is nearing completion, on time and within budget. Apart from a standard type swimming pool the centre will also have a children's play pool, learner's pool, a flume slide, fitness gym and aerobics room.

**Schemes are currently being developed in the following areas:**

**(i) Red Abbey**

Work is complete on the amenity area adjacent the Red Abbey Tower. Conservation work has also been carried out on the tower itself.

**(j) Municipal Golf Course, Mahon**

Improvement works to the Municipal Golf Course in Mahon have been successfully completed and the Pavilion is now open to the public.

**(k) Glen Heights Amenity Area**

Work is ongoing in this location. Park railings have been completed.

**(l) Shandon Cemetery**

Paths have been upgraded but work is still outstanding on the access from Chapel Street.

**(m) Fitzgerald's Park**

New play equipment has been installed. The garden for the blind has been completely refurbished.

## **2.4.5 Cork Suburban Rail Project**

The Cork Suburban Rail Project is a central element of the transport proposals outlined in the Cork Area Strategic Plan. CASP envisages that:

*“there will be a major growth corridor in the northern and eastern part of the metropolitan area between Blarney and Midleton....the location for the development must be close to the existing rail system in order to avoid the traffic gridlock that would occur if a simple roll out of the City were to be adopted as a policy...Central to this strategy is the upgrading and better utilisation of the rail system and the location of development to avail of the rail infrastructure”*

The project will consist of works and the provision of rolling stock associated with:

- Re-opening of and operation of suburban services on the Cork to Midleton Line
- Provision of new services between Mallow and Cork
- Upgrading of rolling stock and frequency on the Cobh line as demand increases

Within the City, the main elements of the project will be the re-opening of Kilbarry Rail Station and the redevelopment of Kent Station.

A Railway Project Steering Group has been set up with representatives from the Local Authority, Iarnrod Eireann and The Department of Transport and a Design Team put in place to commence the project. A Local Area Plan is being prepared for the North Docks Area of the city, which includes Kent Station. A Development Brief has been undertaken for the rail station site at Kilbarry / Blackpool to guide the development of a station at this location. The County Council are also preparing Special Local Area Plans for the lands surrounding the proposed stations at Blarney, Monard/ Rathpeacon, Carrigtwohill, Midleton, these are at Draft Plan stage. A Railway Works Order, to facilitate the necessary engineering and development works, is currently being prepared by Iarnrod Eireann for Phase 1 of the Project.

Cork City Council and Cork County Council have put in place Supplementary Development Contributions Schemes to help fund the Cork Suburban Rail Project which will apply to development proposals in the vicinity of the rail line.

## **3.0 Urban Renewal**

### **3.1 City Regeneration Projects**

Funding for City Regeneration was received under the Urban and Village Renewal Measure of the *National Development Plan* and is being delivered up to 2006. It is mainly focused on the implementation of Phase 3 of the *Historic Centre Action Plan* in the areas outside the city centre's medieval core and the regeneration of St. Patrick's Street. There are a number of projects being funded under the City Regeneration Project. These are at various stages of completion, details of which are contained under the infrastructural section of the Monitor. They include:

- (a) Shandon Cemeteries Refurbishment
- (b) Historic laneways
- (c) Banks of the Lee Project
- (d) Red Abbey Refurbishment
- (e) St Patrick's Street Renovation
- (f) Shandon Street Renovation
- (g) South Parish/Barrack Street

### **3.2 Cork Docklands Development**

The proposals contained in the Docklands Strategy (2001) for the new urban quarter has been incorporated into the City Development Plan, 2004 which gives them a statutory basis. The City Council is in the process of preparing two Local Area Plans for the Area in order to further refine the strategy to ensure a quality development. Work has been ongoing to ensure that the area is adequately serviced to facilitate development in terms of Water, Sewerage, Drainage, Roads, Public Transport, Telecoms etc. Consultant's reports are being concluded on the status of services and proposals are being developed accordingly.

Early indications of success are evident with the development of two office buildings and a hotel at Lapps Quay. Proposals for the re-development of C.I.E. lands at Kent Station and Horgan's Quay are awaited. These will include a new Railway Station, 1,200 approx. apartments and mixed-use commercial development. Proposals for development at Eglinton Street, Water Street and Centre Park Road are at the planning stage.

### **3.3 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme**

#### **Blackpool / Shandon IAP**

The Blackpool / Shandon Urban Renewal Scheme 1999 – 2004 offers tax incentives for both residential and commercial development in seven sub-areas covering almost 30 hectares. The emphasis of the scheme is on the regeneration of the Blackpool / Shandon area. In addition, incentives are available to owner-occupiers throughout the Blackpool/Shandon IAP area for the refurbishment of houses constructed before 1920. There is a requirement to retain, repair and replace traditional features of buildings when carrying out refurbishment work.

The deadline for qualification for tax incentives under the urban renewal Scheme 1999 has been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2006. This extension applies to all commercial, industrial and residential projects and applies where 15% of expenditure has been certified by the Local Authority as having been incurred on such projects by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

The vast majority of applications under the Scheme have been residential investors. As can be seen from the table below the vast majority of residential units are yet to be completed although work is in progress on a large number of these. As a result we should see a large increase in the number of residential units available in the Blackpool / Shandon area over the next 2 years. We are now awaiting these schemes to be completed and final certification is issued.

**Progress to date is highlighted in the following tables:**

**PROGRESS TO DATE**

	<b>November 2004</b>
No. of Applications	77
No. Awaiting Certification	6
No. of Preliminary Certificates	32
No. of Full Certificates	27
No. Applications Refused	9
No. of Invalid Applications	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

**STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT**

	<b>Sept'04 (valid apps)*</b>	<b>Est. Cost ( € )</b>
No. of Developments in Planning	8	83,995,742
No. of Developments with Work in Progress	29	144,356,017
No. of Developments Completed	28	48,943,037
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>277,294,796</b>

## NO OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS

No. of Residential Units	In Planning	Work in Progress	Completed	Total
Houses / Apartments	378	288	159	825

\* along with the 9 refusals, 3 applications were invalid

### **3.4 Living Over The Shop Scheme 2000-2004**

This scheme aims at promoting the rehabilitation of buildings and increasing the supply of residential units within the City Centre. The emphasis is on refurbishment rather than demolition. Tax incentives for the refurbishment of vacant upper floors above business premises for residential use are available in the streets outlined below. The Streets designated under the Living Over The Shop Scheme are as follows: Cornmarket Street (Coal Quay), Castle Street, North Main Street, Washington Street (part of), Oliver Plunkett Street, Barrack Street, Marlborough Street, Parnell Place, Douglas Street, George's Quay, Shandon Street, Leitrim Street, MacCurtain Street, Bridge Street and Great William O'Brien Street (Blackpool Bridge End).

The Living Over The Shop (LOTS) Scheme has been extended to the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2006. With a full planning application having to be submitted to the City Council prior to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2004 in order for projects to qualify for this extension, the last 2 weeks in December saw a rush of planning applications related to LOTS projects. Many of these applicants have submitted LOTS applications in conjunction with their planning applications. Yet as the deadline criteria only refer to submitting a planning application, a number have yet to submit a LOTS application and are therefore not included in the figures given below. It also likely that there are a number of developments eligible to qualify for LOTS which we are not yet aware of and may submit a LOTS application in the near future. Therefore, although the deadline for inclusion in the Scheme has closed, the figures given below do not represent the final totals as they are based only on LOTS applications received. With a mid-2006 termination date for the completion of construction, most of the LOTS projects are underway or in the final stages of planning. The following table gives an up to date position on the applications received:

**Living Over the Shop Scheme: The following table give an up to date position:**

<b><u>PROGRESS TO DATE</u></b>	<b><u>March 2005</u></b>
No. of Applications	37
No. of Preliminary Certificates	11
No. of Full Certificates	15
No. Awaiting Certification	9
Applications Refused	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>

<b><u>STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT</u></b>	<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Est. Cost (€ )</u></b>
No. of Developments in Planning	9	€4,137,015
No. of Developments with Work in Progress	7	€3,746,146
No. of Developments Completed	19	€5,958,189
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>€13,841,350</b>

<b><u>NO OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS</u></b>			
<b><u>No. of Residential Units</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed</u></b>	<b><u>Completed</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Apartments	73	60	133
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>133</b>

### **3.5 RAPID**

RAPID (*Revitalising Areas with Planning, Investment and Development*) is a Government Programme which began in 2001. It aims to improve the quality of life of people living in targeted communities across the country. The RAPID process brings together key players from local Communities, Statutory Agencies and other partners. RAPID aims to tackle identified issues and needs through co-ordinated planning, investment and development. There are 45 RAPID areas nationally.

There are four RAPID areas in Cork City:

- Knocknaheeny / Hollyhill / Churchfield
- Fairhill / Farranree / Gurrabraher
- Blackpool / The Glen/Mayfield
- Togher / Mahon

The RAPID Programme is being co-ordinated by the City Council's Directorate of Community and Enterprise and a co-ordinator has been appointed for each area.

The last year has continued to see many exciting challenges for all involved in RAPID. New funding streams have supported and prioritised the work of RAPID e.g. Local Authority Housing Enhancement Scheme, RAPID Playground Fund, Department of Health & Children funding while other funding streams e.g. Equality for Women, Dormant Accounts and Sports Capital Programme are very clearly prioritising RAPID areas.

## **3.6 Promoting Development**

In addition to activities in the area of urban renewal, the City Council is pro-actively engaged in promoting development in areas suffering from dereliction that require a catalyst for change, and also in providing development guidance for areas of the city that are either strategic development sites or under intense development pressure. Development guidance is supplementary to the objectives contained in the *City Development Plan 2004*, and either takes the form of local area plans or development briefs. In addition to the preparation of site development briefs, the City Council also uses its powers under the Derelict Sites Act to tackle dereliction.

### **3.6.1 Local Area Plans**

The City Council is currently in the process of preparing Local Area Plans for the North Docks and the South Docks areas of the city, which are both strategic development sites of national and regional significance. Area Action Plans are also being prepared for the Cornmarket Street Area of the city centre and also Blackrock Village. Area Actions Plans look at smaller areas in a greater degree of detail, and are prepared where the City Council will take a lead key role in delivering a specific set of actions (e.g. involving major public realm works). Other plans are programmed for work once these plans have been completed.

### **3.6.2 North Docks and South Docks Local Area Plans**

The City Council is in the process of preparing two statutory Local Area Plans for the Docklands, one for the North Docks and one for the South Docks. Both the South and North Docklands plans will build on the objectives adopted in both the *Cork Plan 2004* and the *Docklands Development Strategy, 2001*. It is intended that a “Consultation Draft” of the *North Docks Local Area Plan* will be made available to key stakeholders and the public in June 2005, and the Consultation Draft of the *South Docks Local Area Plan* will be made available by December 2005.

### **3.6.3 Cornmarket Street Action Plan**

The Planning Policy Section has prepared a “Consultation Draft” of the *Cornmarket Street Area Action Plan* for the Cornmarket Street area of the City Centre in conjunction with other Council departments and in consultation with external stakeholders. The document sets out a strategy for the development and improvement of the area, including:

- the expansion of city centre retail uses onto the street;
- the maximisation of the potential of the street market so that it becomes an asset to the area and a people attraction to the area;

- the transformation of the public realm, improvement of the pedestrian domain, and a new traffic management regime compatible with the expansion of the retail core onto the street; and
- the development of strategically important sites.

The Shandon Bridge, opened in December 2004, will provide a new pedestrian route through the area and encourage new investment. In addition, the development of the former Guy's site for retail and residential uses (given planning permission in October 2004) will be the major catalyst for change. The Area Action Plan will be brought to Council for approval in mid 2005.

The City Council are also running an Urban Design "Ideas" Competition for the Kyril's Quay group of sites with a 200 metre frontage onto the river, in order to promote the redevelopment of this flagship site. Judging of entries will be followed by selected presentation of submissions in mid May 2005.

#### **3.6.4 Blackrock Village Area Action Plan**

An area action plan is being prepared for the heart of Blackrock Village, with the aim of setting out the City Council's strategy and objectives for the development and improvement of the area. Major projects will include the redevelopment of the Harbour area, the new Blackrock Park, and the new Blackrock Castle / Harbour Walkway. The plan will include an implementation strategy to identify how the plan will be delivered.

#### **3.6.5 Development Briefs**

A series of Development briefs have been prepared for sites with development potential in the city. Briefs are completed or are in preparation for the Saint Patrick's Street/ Academy Street group of sites, the Kilbarry Railway Station site, the Sunbeam site in the Blackpool valley, the An Post site on Eglinton Street, and Water Street. Briefs will be prepared for the North Mall Distillery site, the Saint Patrick's Quay group of sites, and others, in response to development pressure. Building on the objectives outlined in the *City Plan 2004*, the briefs outline the opportunities and constraints that are relevant to each particular site and examine the potential new uses that would be acceptable. Issues such as building design principles, movement and accessibility, parking, and public realm design are also considered in the briefs.

## 4.0 Overall Prospects

Economic indicators available for 2004 and the first quarter of 2005 highlight a period of strong economic expansion with ESRI figures calculating estimated output growth at 5.6% in real GDP terms. The growth in output as measured by real GNP is estimated to have reached 5.1% in 2004, its highest rate since its peak in 2000.

The pace of inflation as measured by the consumer price index moderated during 2004 with the latest available statistics indicating price growth of 2.7% for the year to October 2004. The ESRI's Spring Quarterly Report (2005) forecasts inflation in consumer prices to average at 2.3% in 2005. While this represents a generally favourable picture compared with the recent past, nonetheless commentators argue that domestic inflationary pressures at the current juncture need to be firmly contained in order to ensure continued economic growth and competitiveness within the international market. Prices in Ireland are already well above the Euro area average, following several years of relatively high inflation since 1999.

While economic forecasts predict some uncertainty in the short-term outlook, general forecasts maintain that the Irish economy remains fundamentally healthy. A failure to maintain Ireland's external competitiveness and a failure to deliver the necessary improvements in infrastructure could seriously affect growth in the medium term, however. A further substantial appreciation of the Euro could also pose serious problems for the Euro area and the Irish economy. However, the ESRI forecasts possibilities for actual output to perform better than that predicted, fuelled by skilled immigration and further infrastructural investment.

Cork City is currently enjoying a period of confidence reflected in its current status as European Capital of Culture and expansion of all sectors of the economy. Major investment in public realm, cultural and amenity projects and in public transport measures has been matched by significant private sector investment in residential, retail, office and hotel sectors. The momentum generated by this investment and the impact of Cork 2005 should carry forward to generate a positive outlook for the coming years.