

CORK
ECONOMIC
MONITOR

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Cork City Council
Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí



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1.0 National Context

The Irish economy is in its third consecutive year of recession. Outlined below are a number of key indicators of the State's current economic performance.

1.1 Public Finances

The Exchequer deficit for 2009 was €24.641 billion, compared to a recorded annual deficit of €12.7 billion for 2008. This change represents a year on year increase of 48%.

Total tax receipts for the first 3 months of 2010 was €7.236 billion, down 15% on the same period last year (€8.51 billion). VAT receipts, stamp duty, income tax and corporation tax were below target, but capital gains tax was above target. The Department of Finance forecasts that total tax receipts to the year end will fall 6% below the level registered at the end of 2009, i.e. €31.05 billion.

Total public spending (expenditure) to the end of March 2010 was €11.045 billion which represents a deficit (relative to receipts) of €3.7 billion. This figure contrasts to a deficit figure of €2.6 billion for this time last year. *(Source Department of Finance)*

Gross Domestic Product fell 7% in 2009; forecast to decrease by a further 1% in 2010.

Gross National Product fell 11.3% in 2009; forecast to decrease by a further 2% in 2009. *(Source Central Bank Quarterly Bulletin)*

Table 1.1 Economic Growth / Decline

	2007	2008	2009	<i>(forecast) 2010</i>
GDP	6%	-1%	-7%	-1%
GNP	4.1%	-2.6%	-11.3%	-2%

(Estimates & forecasts from Central Bank)

1.2 Consumer Price Index

Consumer Prices in April, as measured by the CPI, increased by 0.2% in the month. This compares to a decrease of 0.8% recorded in April of last year. As a result, prices on average, as measured by the CPI, were 2.1% lower in April compared with April 2009.

The EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) showed no change in the month, compared to an increase of 0.1% in April of last year. As a result, prices on average, as measured by the HICP, were 2.5% lower in April compared with April 2009.

Despite the general downward trend price increases were experienced in the key areas of home heating costs, mortgage payments and petrol prices. It is likely that increases in fuel and mortgage rate costs will continue to be experienced in the May monthly returns as the impact of the carbon tax on home heating fuels will be measured and the weakening position of the Euro (trading at a low of €1.23 to the dollar as of the 1/6/10) will mean petrol and diesel prices will either plateau at current rates or continue to increase.

Mortgage rates are also likely to show an increase in the CPI in May as ICS Building Society increased both its variable and fixed loan rates by 0.5% in the middle of April.

1.3 Inflation

The 2009 annual rate of inflation (CPI) was -4.5%, compared to +4.1% in 2008. The 2009 EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) annual rate of inflation was -1.7% as opposed to +3.1% in 2008. *(Source CSO)*

1.4 European Central Bank Interest Rate

The ECB record low interest rate of 1.0% remains in effect. Due to volatility in EU markets at present exacerbated by uncertainty surrounding the planned €750 billion EU/IMF bailout package consensus amongst commentators forecasts this rate to remain until at least late this year or possibly even early next year.

1.5 ISEQ Index

The ISEQ index registered an increase of 21% in value in 2009 (2,974) from its record low of 2,343 in 2008. (Source: *Irish Stock Exchange, Watson Wyatt 'Statistics in Ireland'*)

The ISEQ was valued at 2,947 points on the 1/6/10 (Source: *Irish Stock Exchange.ie.*). Given huge volatility in EU financial markets over recent months the value of Irish traded shares continues to fluctuate dipping below 2800 points in late May. This trend looks likely to continue until stability returns to the world markets.

1.6 Exports and Imports

January 2010 trade statistics from the CSO when compared with corresponding 2009 figures showed that goods and services exports decreased overall by 3% over the period. Imports decreased by 16% reflecting the poor state of domestic demand.

Despite this decrease the performance of Irish exports overall showed an impressive resilience over the period particularly when exports of many other EU countries have fallen by over 20%. Exports have and will continue to be a major indicator of economic performance given the open and heavily dependent nature of the Irish economy.

Encouragingly Dublin Port Company published its Monthly Trading Update for March 2010 and the year to date (Q1 2010), which reveals a fourth consecutive month of increased trading activity (a 13.5% rise in total throughput and 23.5% in exports in March) at Ireland's largest port. Dublin Port handles over two-thirds of containerised trade to and from Ireland and 50% of all Ireland's imports and exports, making it a significant facilitator of Ireland's economy. The figures for Q1 2010 reveal a pattern of steady, incremental increased trading activity across both exports and imports. The stronger trading performance in both the export and import sectors points to a more balanced sign of economic recovery.

1.7 Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI)

The PMIs cover manufacturing, construction and service sector activity, representing the vast majority of all private sector economic activity. An index reading above 50.0 indicates an overall increase in activity, below 50.0 an overall decrease. The greater the divergence from 50.0, the greater the rate of change signalled.

-Services PMI-

Ireland's services industry grew in April for the first time since January 2008 with managers reporting rising confidence about economic prospects. The NCB Purchasing Managers' Index rose to 51.0 from 49.6 in March.

-Construction PMI-

The Ulster Bank Construction Purchasing Managers' Index® (PMI®) for March was 42.3, still well below the expansion threshold of 50, thus clearly pointing to ongoing falls in construction activity. However, the PMI managed to rise for the third month in a row and the March level is the highest reading seen in almost two and a half years.

Manufacturing PMI

March data signalled that operating conditions in the Irish manufacturing sector improved for the first time in twenty-eight months. The single figure measure rose strongly to 53.0 in March from 48.6 in February. Most encouragingly Irish manufacturing output again rose in May, as employment in the sector increased for the first time in more than two years, and new orders continued to grow. The NCB manufacturing PMI rose from 53.4 to 54.1, staying above the 50 mark.

1.8 Labour Market

Nationally, the seasonally adjusted Live Register total increased from 432,500 in April to 439,100 in May, an increase of 6,600. This follows a decrease from 433,000 in March to 432,500 in April, a month earlier. In the year to May 2010 there was an unadjusted increase in the Live Register of 43,788 (+11.1%). This compares with an increase of 50,781 (+13.3%) in the year to April 2010.

The standardised unemployment rate in May was 13.7%. This compares with 13.1% in the fourth quarter of 2009, the latest seasonally adjusted unemployment rate from the Quarterly National Household Survey.

According to the latest ESRI report unemployment is expected to fall between 2010 and 2011, averaging 13¾ per cent in 2010 and 13 per cent in 2011. This expected fall in the rate of unemployment is related to expected migratory outflows – 60,000 in the year ending April 2010 and 40,000 in the year ending April 2011. This fall will also be aided by a fall in labour force participation.

2.0 Local Indicators

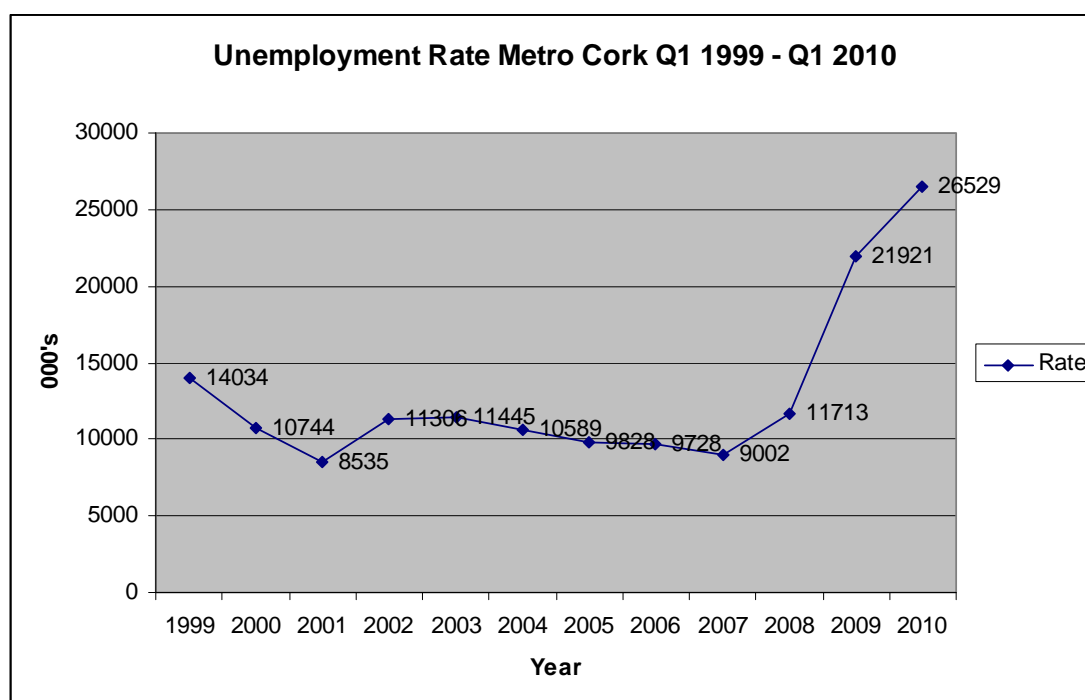
2.1 Labour Force

Live Register figures in this section have been prepared on a Q1 basis to facilitate direct comparisons with succeeding quarterly returns throughout the year. The Live Register total increased by 17% in the Metropolitan Cork area for the period Q1 2009 – Q1 2010; compared to a nationwide increase of 15%.

It is interesting however to compare the latest Live Register figures with those returned in the September 2009 Cork Economic Monitor. Results show that the Live Register figure for Metro Cork has dropped marginally from 26,532 (Sept. '09) to 26,529 (March '10). This shows that despite the year on year increase figures for the Metro area have remained virtually static over the 6 month period pointing to a welcome slow down in the unemployment rate across the area.

It should be noted however that the latest CSO returns for May 2010 show that the live register figure for Metropolitan Cork stands at 26,836, an increase of 307 on the March figure.

Figure 2.1 Live Register Metropolitan Cork Area.



Persons on the Live Register 2009 - 2010

The following table compares Q1 returns for Metropolitan Cork area to the National total.

Table 2.2 March 2009 – March 2010

	Metropolitan Cork			Ireland		
	March '09	March '10	% change	March '09	March '10	% change
Male	15,187	18,178	+16%	246,800	286,400	+13%
under 25	2,950	3,120	5%	51,800	54,100	4%
over 25	12,237	15,058	19%	195,000	232,200	16%
Female	6,734	8,351	+19%	120,500	146,700	+17%
under 25	1,556	1,730	10%	27,200	30,500	10%
over 25	5,178	6,621	21%	93,300	116,100	19%
Total	21,921	26,529	17%	367,300	433,100	+15%

(Source CSO)

The March 2010 Live Register for **Metropolitan Cork**, (Carrigaline, Cobh, Cork City & Midleton) totals 26,529, a 17% increase on the March '09 figure which is higher than the national increase of 15% over the same period.

The rate of increase of Metropolitan Cork males on the register is 16%, compared to the national rate of 13%, whereas the rate of increase of females is 19%, compared to the national rate of 17%.

The no. of 'males under 25yrs' on the live register in Metropolitan Cork has increased by 5%, compared to the national rate increase of 4%. The number of 'females under 25yrs' has risen by 10% reflecting the same national increase for the cohort.

The number of females 'over 25' in Metropolitan Cork has risen by 21% compared to the national rate of 19%, whereas the no. of males 'over 25' in Metropolitan Cork has risen by 19%, compared to national rate increase of 16%.

Interestingly, the overall Live Register month on month figures for Metropolitan Cork, reflecting seasonal factors have decreased by 0.16% between February and March 2010, to 26,529 from 26,571 persons. This compares to a national increase of 0.13% over the period.

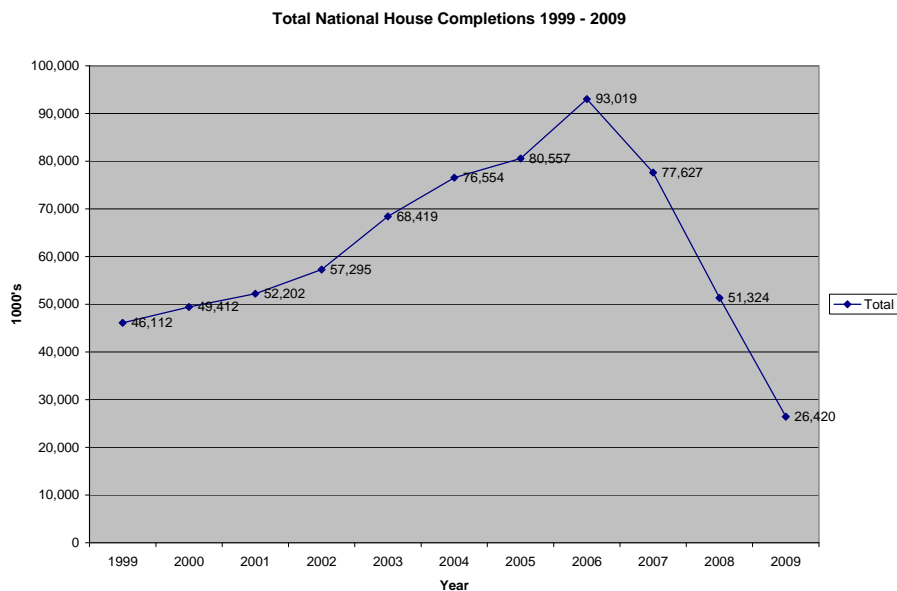
The Live Register for the south-west region totalled 61,376 at the end of March 2010 compared to 51,419 for this time last year. When compared to the September 2009 Cork Economic Monitor returns where the figure was 59,163 the overall increase for the South West region over the 6 month period has been 2,213 persons or +3.6%.

2.2 Housing

Housing output

Nationally, output peaked in 2006 at 93,019 units, but declined in 2007 by 16% to 77,627 units and further declined in 2008 by 34% to 51,324 units. The recorded end of year figure for 2009 was 26,420 representing a further decrease of 48%. The latest DoE stats show that the house completion figure for January and February 2010 was 1,207 and 1,258 which contrasts sharply with the same months in 2009 which registered a total of 2,659 for January (a decrease of 54%) and 2,613 for February (a decrease of 52%).

Figure 2.2 National House Completions 1999-2009



Local Authority Housing

Cork City Council's Housing construction programme includes provision of social and affordable housing units. 497 units were completed in 2009 with 82 units to date in 2010.

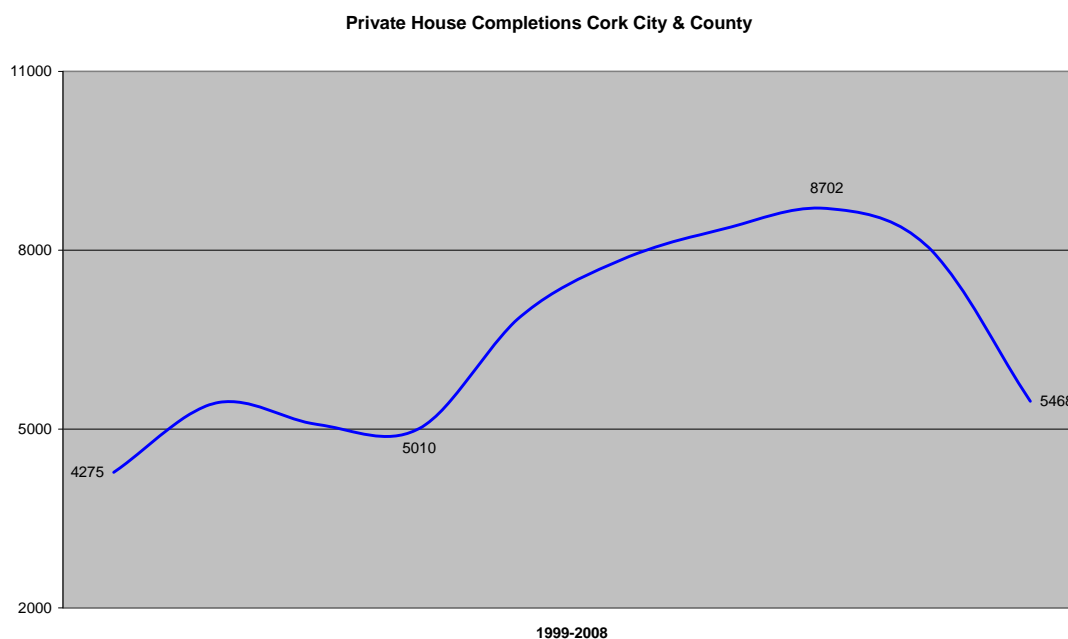
Table 2.3 Social & affordable housing construction programme

	Units completed '09	Units completed '10 (April)	Under construction
Social	218	79	274
Affordable	206	0	48
Voluntary Sector	73	3	53

Private House Completions Cork City & County 1999 - 2008

Private house completions for 2008 declined by 32% to 5,468 units from 8,049 units in 2007 and from 8,702 units in 2006; representing, a 37% decline over two years. Figures for Q1 and Q2 of 2009 place the completed number for the City and County at 1,636 which is substantially below the returned figure for the same period in 2008, i.e. 2,807 or -41%.

Figure 2.3 Private House Completions (1999-2008)



(Source: DoEHLG: ESB connections)

2.3 Property

House Prices Nationally

Average national house prices fell by 18.9% in 2009 leaving house prices at a level unseen since April 2003. Since their peak in February 2007 house prices have fallen by 31.5% on average. The average price for a house nationally in December 2009 was EUR 213,183, compared with EUR 261,573 in December 2008 and a peak of EUR 311,078 in February 2007. The average price for a house in Dublin and outside Dublin in December 2009 was EUR 278,767 and EUR 189,643 respectively. (Source: Permanent TSB HP Index 22/2/10). Overall second-hand house prices decreased by 20.3% in 2009. (Source: sherryfitzg.ie).

House Prices – Cork City and County

As of March 21st 2010 the average house price in County Cork was 256,899 (*Irish Property Watch*). *Daft.ie* in its house price review for Q1 of 2010 gives specific figures for both the City and County placing the average house price for the city at €248,902 and county at €232,063 representing a drop of 33% and 30.9% from their height in Q3 2007 respectively.

Rents - National

Daft.ie reported rents fell just over 15% over the course of 2009, compared to a 12% fall in 2008. The average rent nationwide has fallen from over €1,000 in early 2008 to €765 in January 2010.

Rents - Cork

In Cork, rents have fallen year on year by -16.3% leaving the average monthly rental rate at €785. This fall compares to falls in Dublin City (i.e. City Centre and north and south Dublin City) of -18.5%, Galway City of -10.9% and Limerick City of -15.9% over the same period.

2.4 Commercial Property

The composite index of commercial rents fell by 8.77% in Q1 of 2010 and by 27.17% in the 12 months to the end of March 2010. From market peak in 2007, the index is down 41.12% (*source: Lisneys*).

Office

According to Sherry Fitzgerald's Spring 2010 Regional Commercial Markets Report the total quantity of office space taken up in Cork in the twelve months to the end of March 2010 stood at 31,000 sq.m. While a comparison with the same period in 2009 shows an increase in transaction activity of 36% much of this activity can be attributed to one off large deals such as the occupancy of Sheehan Healthcare of 13,900 sq.m at City Gate last year. Despite this increase in activity the office vacancy rate stands at 21.1% with over 109,400 sq.m of office space available for rent in Cork.

More specifically, in the City Centre the vacancy rate has increased from 10% to 18.1% over the past 12 months with the corresponding rate in the suburbs increasing from 17.3% to 23.3%. In the case of Dublin the vacancy rate stands at 22.5% overall with the corresponding figure for the City Centre significantly beneath that at 14.5%.

Retail

The retail climate in Ireland and by association Cork remains very challenging. The nature of the retail letting market has changed considerably with short term/temporary lettings becoming commonplace. Added to this a very high percentage of rental agreements are now turnover related with break options featuring regularly.

Despite the undoubtedly challenging retail environment on the ground national indicators show that the downturn in the sector may have reached its nadir with the sector now beginning to experience a slow but steady return to positive growth. There has been an annual increase in consumer sentiment (measured by the KBC / ESRI Index) and provisional estimates are now available from the CSO for the first quarter of 2010 which show that the volume of retail sales increased 1.1% year on year and the value of retail sales declined by 3.6% year on year. These indicators point to a welcome but fragile growth in the retail sector.

Cork City is performing relatively well despite the wider challenges in the sector with new retail floorspace being opened and the retail offer expanding particularly in the city centre. The Opera Lane development takes in two city centre blocks in Cork and adds 20,000 sq.m. of retail capacity to the city. Opera Lane, one of only two retail schemes to open in Ireland in

2009, is over 80% let to a host of major international retailers, most of whom are opening their first stores in Cork. Immediately adjacent to the Opera Lane development the new retail scheme on Half Moon Street has added a further 10,000 sq.m. of retail space to the City Centre offer. Boots have taken c. 4,000 sq.m. of space here and opened for trade in November 2009. When combined with the 13,000sq.m of space provided in the new Dunnes block of St. Patrick's street Cork City is developing a valuable modern retail stock bringing a necessary vitality to the heart of the city.

Industrial

Supply levels in the industrial market show no signs of easing in the first quarter of 2010 with the total quantity of available space standing at 161,000 sq.m at the end of March representing a 12% increase on the previous quarter and a 13% increase overall on the same period in 2009 (*Source: Sherry Fitz*).

2.5 Cork Business Sentiment

The results of Cork Chamber's Q1 Economic Trends Survey, based on the responses of 124 Cork based companies is important and gives a valuable local indicator of business sentiment in the region. The survey shows that positive sentiments highlighted in the previous quarter's survey continue as more companies are becoming increasingly confident about their future prospects (*Cork Chamber Economic Bulletin Q1 2010*). 69% of those surveyed are confident of the future of their businesses, an increase of 5% on the previous quarter (Q4 2009) and a significant 18% increase on the same quarter in 2009. In relation to job creation the Chamber outline the importance of maintaining current employment levels in the region so that a sound footing is provided to harness the potential of any upturn in the wider economy. Importantly the survey highlighted that 73% of respondents in the region have no intention of reducing employee numbers over the next 12 months, a welcome contrast to the 48% figure returned in Q1 2009.

2.6 Tourism

Overseas visitors to Ireland decreased to 6.5 million in 2009 from 7.4 million in 2008, a reduction of 12%. This decline appears to be continuing in 2010 where 313,800 overseas visits to Ireland during January 2010 was down 26% on the same month in 2009. In 2008 3.8 million (47% of total) visited the South-West region. Tourism revenue generated totalled €6,327 million for 2008, compared to €6,453m in 2007. Tourists spent €1,205.5 million in the South-West region in 2008. Available figures for 2009 show that just over 3 million people visited the region in 2009.

Table 2.6 'Overseas' visitors to Ireland

Year	Number of visitors (000's)
2005	6,763
2006	7,417
2007	7,739
2008	7,436
2009	6,555

(*Source: Fáilte Ireland*)

2.7 Vehicle Sales

The total number of **new vehicles** licensed nationwide (private cars and goods vehicles) in 2009 was 73,125 compared to 194,817 for same period in 2008, a decline of 62.5%. The corresponding figures for **used vehicles** of 76,264 & 87,740 over the same period represents a less significant 13% decline.

Table 2.7 New Vehicle Registrations

Year	Cork City & County	State
2005	28,568	219,284
2006	30,114	233,727
2007	31,767	246,446
2008	25,026	194,817
2009	9,802	73,125

(Source Central Statistics Office)

Nationally, the downward trend as evidenced above has been arrested as new passenger car registrations for April 2010 were 8,544 up on 4,373 on the same month last year. This corresponds to a 95% increase on the same month last year. *(source: SIMI)*. This increase can be largely attributed to the governments "scrappage" scheme introduced in the December 2009 budget which many argue served as an important catalyst to reigniting sales within the motor trade industry.

Figures released by SIMI (Society of the Irish Motor Industry) show that as of Friday 28th May, new car sales have surpassed total new car sales for the whole of 2009 (57,460).

The figures

- 57,898 new cars sold this year
- 438 more than total amount sold last year
- 40,933 new cars sold this time last year
- 41% up on last year

(source: SIMI).

Interestingly corresponding figures for new light commercial goods vehicles have shown a steady increase over the first 4 months of 2010 with the April figure now at 5,871 up on 4,401 this time last year. The same cannot however be said for heavy commercial goods vehicles which continue to show declines month on month in 2010 with a year on year percentage decrease of approx. 21%.

3.0 Local Planning

3.1 Local Plans

- The South Parish Action Area Plan was formally adopted by Council on the 15th March 2010.
- The Draft Blackpool Village Action Area Plan was out on public consultation until the 12th May 2010. A Manager's Report has now being prepared on the outcome of this consultation period.

- The North Blackpool Local Area Plan has undergone an initial period of public consultation which concluded in January 2010. A Draft Local Area Plan for the area will be brought to Council in the Autumn of 2010.
- The South Mahon Local Area Plan is in the early stages of preparation and an initial period of public consultation has been undertaken. As part of this consultation a successful workshop was organised with interested stakeholders in April. This period of consultation concluded 10th May 2010. A report is going to Council in June on the outcomes of this period of consultation.

3.2 Development Monitoring

Planning Applications

Planning applications have decreased significantly over the past 12 months continuing a general downward trend in application numbers beginning in 2007. Cork City Council received 612 applications in 2009, granting permission for 502 developments. The number of applications has decreased by 32% compared to 2008 and 48% compared to 2007. Application numbers for Q1 2010 show a reduction of 32% on Q1 of 2009.

Table 3.2 'Quarterly Planning Application Returns'

Period	No. of Applications
Q1 2008	245
Q2 2008	256
Q3 2008	202
Q4 2008	198
Q1 2009	142
Q2 2009	187
Q3 2009	159
Q4 2009	124
Q1 2010	96

Residential Development

Cork City Council permitted 45 no. residential units during the 6 month period July 2009 – Dec 2009, (made up of 15 no. dwelling houses, 27 no. apartments, 3 no. student residences). Apartments account for 60% of all units permitted, dwelling houses, 33%.

In the first six months of 2009, Cork City Council permitted 101 no. residential units (46 no. dwelling houses, 54 no. apartments, 1 no. granny flat). The number of units permitted in the first six months of 2009 declined by 64% on the previous six months. When compared to the first 6 months of 2009 the number of units permitted has fallen a further 44%.

Housing Land Availability Study

Cork City Council's submission to the DoEHLG indicates that 152 hectares of zoned lands was available for residential development (30/6/09) with a residential capacity of 9,773 units. There are 1,840 residential units permitted, with at least two years remaining on the duration of the respective permissions.

(Note this survey excludes sites less than 0.5hectares and sites with capacity of less than 20 units and all but 12.5ha of the South Docks Local Area Plan study area due to Seveso and Infrastructural constraints).

Office Development

In 2009 the City Council permitted 5,447 sq.m. of office space within the City Centre of which the more significant schemes include a 5-storey office block of 2,055 sq.m. at the junction of Crane Lane and Phoenix Street, off South Mall; 1,420 sq.m. at the site of the former Capitol Cinema on Grand Parade and 1,298 sq.m. on Lavitt's Quay

The City Council also permitted 3,114 sq.m. of office space within the city suburbs including 500sq.m. of ancillary office space in Togher.

Office (gross) floorspace granted totals

	General Office	Retail Office	Bus & Technology	'Ancillary' Office	Total
Docklands	-	48 sq.m.	-	-	48 sq.m.
City Centre	5,392 sq.m.	55 sq.m.	-	-	5,447 sq.m.
Blackpool	-	-	-	-	-
Suburbs	418 sq.m.	1,949 sq.m.	247 sq.m.	500 sq.m.	3,114 sq.m.
Total	5,810 sq.m.	4,402 sq.m.	247 sq.m.	500 sq.m.	8,170 sq.m.

Retail Development

In 2009, Cork City Council permitted 6,006 sq.m. (net) comparison retail floorspace but has also permitted the loss of 1,602 sq.m. floorspace resulting in an increase of 4,404 sq.m.

The most significant permission is a mixed-use retail and office scheme on the site of the former Capitol Cinema fronting onto Grand Parade and St. Patrick's Street, which includes 5,813sq.m. (net) retail comparison.

Cork City Council permitted 757 sq.m. (net) convenience retail floorspace but has also permitted the loss of 356 sq.m. floorspace resulting in an increase of 401 sq.m.

City Council permissions have resulted in an increase of 4,805 sq.m. (net) retail floorspace within the city centre.

In 2009, Cork City Council permitted 1,416 sq.m. (net) comparison retail floorspace within the city suburbs of which 973 sq.m. is in Blackpool. 1,949 sq.m. (net) of convenience retail floorspace was permitted in the suburbs.

Retail (net) floorspace granted totals

	Comparison	Convenience	Total
City Centre	4,404 sq.m.	401 sq.m.	4,805 sq.m.
Blackpool	973 sq.m.	-	973 sq.m.
Suburbs	443 sq.m.	1,949 sq.m.	2,392 sq.m.
Total	5,820 sq.m.	2,350 sq.m.	8,170 sq.m.

4.0 Overall Prospects

National Context

The Central Bank in their April 2010 commentary highlight that while prospects for domestic demand remain subdued and the outlook for construction investment unfavourable the evidence suggests that the contraction in consumer demand, while still weak, is continuing to moderate. As stated "both sentiment indicators and retail sales data point towards some stabilisation and there is a prospect of a return to moderate growth later in the year".

As employment developments tend to lag output however, the Central Bank forecast some further drop in employment this year, though at a moderating rate. This it is believed will put upward pressure on unemployment, although this will be reduced somewhat by the pick-up in outward migration and the fall in labour force participation. The Central Bank consider it is likely to be 2011 before output growth will be strong enough to exert any noticeable downward pressure on unemployment.

Much of the economic forecasting available however add a qualifying caveat stating generally that the timing and the strength of a recovery will depend heavily on the Irish economy's external performance in the area of exports. The ESRI expect GNP to grow by 2¾ per cent and GDP to grow by 2½ per cent in 2011. While this return to growth is to be welcomed, it should be seen as a modest pace of growth. Ireland is very much dependent on the performance of the advanced economies and can only benefit indirectly from strong growth in emerging markets.

While the global economy recovered more strongly than expected in the second half of 2009, commentators are quick to point out that the performance of the major industrialised economies remains patchy and uneven. On the basis of the projections from the main international forecasting agencies, however, demand is set to expand modestly in Ireland's main export markets in 2010, in marked contrast to the contraction last year. The weakened state of the Euro at present will undoubtedly help this situation in the short to medium term.

Local Context

While the local indicators for Cork as expected reflect the poor state of the Irish economic climate generally certain indicators and surveys point to welcome stabilization in the region. Live register returns for Metropolitan Cork for example appear to be leveling out with fluctuations becoming more modest and manageable. Allied to this, sentiment among businesses in Cork show a growing confidence with the vast majority of respondents indicating they have no intention of further cutting jobs in the next year.

The number of planning applications in Cork City has reduced in line with national trends but queries and applications for larger schemes remains strong providing a solid foundation for new investment in retail and office floorspace once stability returns to the economic and financial markets. Importantly a number of high profile companies have either expanded or opened their doors in Cork over the past 6 months, for example, McAfee and Boots with Sheehan Healthcare expected to open its private hospital in June of 2010. These companies provide important job opportunities and highlight the attractiveness of Cork to multinationals as a dynamic place to do business.

It is important however that efforts are made to support indigenous Cork business which can provide a sustainable base for the local economy. Access to capital remains a difficulty but opportunities exist for local business, both new and established, to negotiate favourable rents and lease terms and provide a future presence on key streets and in areas throughout the city where previously such a presence wasn't achievable given unsustainable terms.