

# M6 Galway to Ballinasloe PPP Opens

The Ballinasloe to Galway section of the M6 motorway, opened on 18 December, completing the Dublin to Galway Inter-Urban Motorway.

Designed by Atkins and built by N6 Construction Ltd, the scheme comprises 56 kilometres of dual carriageway forming a section of the major inter-urban route between Dublin and Galway, with 10 kilometres of link roads connecting the towns of Athenry, Loughrea and Ballinasloe and 32 kilometres of side roads.

Engineers faced several major challenges including the variation of soil type between rock and very soft soil and large areas of Karst (cavernous limestone). The design included for contingencies in the Karst areas to allow for underground caverns. Soft material was generally excavated and replaced but surcharging techniques were utilised in some locations. The road layout design

also involved the design of five grade separated junctions located at Glennascaul, Athenry, Carrowkeel, West Ballinasloe and Tulrush. In addition to the geometrical design, Atkins designed the following elements associated with road design: site clearance; permanent fencing; accommodation works; drainage; safety barriers; traffic signs and road markings; environmental barriers; traffic calming works and kerbing, footways and paved areas.

The design encompassed both major and minor structures throughout the scheme with the latter consisting of numerous mammal underpasses and small culverts. In total 68 major structures were required to be designed and these included: 26 overbridges, 12 underbridges, three road over rail bridges, eight river bridges, 17 large culverts and two Bat underpasses.



FÁS hosted their annual Excellence through People awards in the National Library of Ireland, Kildare St, Dublin 2 on 30 November. Pictured at the awards are (l-r): Michael McDonnell, chairman, Excellence Through People Approvals Board; Martina Meegan, director, Skyway; Sean Haughey, Minister for Lifelong Learning; and Paul O'Toole, director general, FÁS. Martina and Kieran Meegan, directors of Skyway in Kells, received this prestigious award on behalf of their company. Skyway is Ireland's largest specialised subcontractor and provides customised solutions for all safety at height requirements including Safety at Height training. The company has been in business since 2000 and currently employs 16 people.

## Upward-Only Rent Reviews Ban a Retrograde Step

The Irish Auctioneers & Valuers Institute (IAVI) has described the banning of upward-only rent reviews in business leases by the Minister for Justice as a retrograde step and one that is not conducive to recovery in the property sector.

IAVI president Áine Myler says the approach looks solely at the retail market and not at the commercial property market as a whole. 'It ignores issues in the office sector which are as important to the economic prospects of the country,' she says. 'There are clear circumstances where it works to tenants' advantage to enter into a lease with upward-only reviews. Prolonged rent-free periods may be offered to compensate for fitting-out and moving costs without which a move to new premises would be unaffordable. This hand holding move by the Minister dictates lease terms and precludes these choices for parties acting with professional property and legal advice.'

In a submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment the IAVI recommended that the legislation should at least allow tenants and landlords, acting under legal advice, to contract out of the Land Reform Act allowing them the choice to agree to upward only rent reviews. In addition, the IAVI recommended that it may be wise to allow both parties to agree that the initial rent in any lease would be a base level, below which it would not fall even in cases of upward or downward reviews.

According to Ms Myler, the move to prohibit upward only rent reviews will automatically devalue development land and existing buildings, especially those that are unlet. 'This change in legislation will delay the return of development activity to the marketplace and reduce its scale once it returns. In addition, funding for new developments will be extraordinarily difficult to obtain as it will be difficult to confidently predict a minimum return on investment.'

Marie Hunt, director of research at CB Richard Ellis maintains that a 'two tier investment market' will not emerge with investors paying a premium for properties on existing leases and having limited appetite for properties let on leases after 28 February 2010, when the legislation comes into operation.

## Glenkerrin's €550m

### London Scheme Rejected

Glenkerrin's plans for a €550m development in Ealing, West London, have been rejected by the British government.

Communities secretary John Denham found that the modern buildings proposed for the 4.2 acre site, dubbed Ealing Leaf, were not suitable for the town centre. The project had the backing of mayor of London Boris Johnson and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.

The first application in relation to the site was made in September 2007, with Foster + Partners designing the town element of the scheme. A revised application was later made for 577 new homes on the site. Glenkerrin is believed to have spent about £7m so far on designs for the scheme.

Glenkerrin will re-assess its options and submit a new planning application in the next few months.

Glenkerrin also owns a former pub in Canary Wharf, London's docklands where the company plans to develop a five-star hotel and more than 400 apartments in a tower called The Pride.