

Centre for architecture proposed in new draft

A new policy on architecture, prepared by an advisory group set up by Environment Minister John Gormley, is expected to go to the Cabinet before Christmas. The appointment of a state architect is said to be one of the main items in the draft. According to *The Irish Times*, the draft suggests that the government should lead by example and "underline the importance of architectural quality as a cornerstone of national policy" by establishing the office

of state architect to oversee implementation of policy and other actions. More than 60 actions are set out in the draft, one of which is replacing Action on Architecture which was adopted in 2002 but not fully implemented. The draft also emphasises that in-house architectural expertise in relevant public authorities "is an essential prerequisite in achieving a good quality built environment". The idea of establishing a centre for

architecture, probably in Dublin, is also backed along with an "architect-in-residence" scheme for primary and post-primary schools.

The draft says research is also needed on "sustainable place-making", energy performance and life-cycle costing of new buildings, the environmental performance of high-density housing and the potential for new building systems to deliver higher standards.

More lay-offs expected by end of year

Firms that were reliant on the Irish housing market are now making between one-third and half their staff redundant, according to industry sources. RIAI President Seán O'Laioire has said that as many as one-third of the 3,000

architects employed in Ireland could be out of a job by the end of the year because of the downturn in the construction sector. He also said in an article in the *Sunday Business Post* that about 70% of architecture firms in the

country would normally employ about 10 people each, but many of these had now reduced their staff to about three people. He added that he was also aware of larger firms that had laid off between 20 and 30 people.

John Lewis stores by O'Donnell & Tuomey put on hold



Plans for two flagship John Lewis stores in the UK - by O'Donnell & Tuomey and Acme - have been put on hold amid a wider slowdown in the retail giant's development.

Developer Hammerson confirmed recently that a John Lewis store by Acme in Leeds' £800 million Eastgate Quarters scheme and a branch by O'Donnell & Tuomey in the £600 million Sevenstone development in Sheffield had been mothballed until summer 2009 "at least". This follows an admission by the John Lewis Partnership that its plan to open around 20 new branches in locations such as Cardiff, Stratford, Oxford, Portsmouth, Crawley and Lisburn in Northern Ireland is set to be hampered by the economic crisis.

A spokeswoman for the retailer said plans for nine stores officially in the pipeline are still in place: "We are confident that more shops will be announced," she said. "The current climate affects developers, but John Lewis takes a long-term view because we don't have to respond to shareholders. We remain committed to bringing all those shops in the public domain to fruition."



A clean slate

Planning has been granted for this house in Lislarry, Co Sligo, designed by Sterrin O'Shea. The brief was for a warm bright open-plan family home which would take advantage of the views towards Ben Bulbin to the East and the Atlantic Ocean to the North. The existing 1930s cottage had to be retained and a two storey extension wasn't permitted so the architect proposed a new form separated from the original via a glazed link, but slipped in such a way that it allowed for a screened car-parking forecourt and a sheltered deck area. This new structure is clad entirely in slate matching that of the existing pitched roof.

