

**Business**  
& Finance

WHO'S  
WHO

IN IRISH BUSINESS

2008

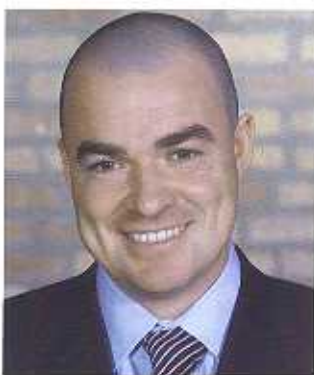
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€8.75 including tax  
US \$10.27; Sterling £5.85

group of nomination committee member and finance committee chairman. He joined the group in 1975 and was appointed to the board four years later. In 1985, he took his present position as chairman.

#### SEAN CONLON



Sean Conlon is the chairman and co-founder of **Connaught Real Estate Finance LLC**, which provides mezzanine financing for large residential development projects. The company currently has over \$100m under management throughout the US. He is also co-owner of Van and Conlon, a developer of vacation homes in the midwest.

Conlon attended the College of Marketing and Design in Dublin. He moved to London and worked as a credit analyst for Middle East Bank, before emigrating to the US in 1990. He landed work quickly, but initially as a janitor, cleaning the hallways of an apartment building owned by a distant cousin. However, by 1993, he was setting annual records among Chicago realtors with sales in excess of \$150m, while working for Koenig and Strey, where he was the leading salesman three years in a row.

In January 2000, Conlon, Frank Parkinson and a third partner, Tim O'Neill, joined forces to open Sussex and Reilly (the maiden names of Parkinson's and Conlon's

mothers, respectively), an Illinois-based property brokerage firm. It hit the ground running, with a strategy that combined turnkey service with competitive commissions. The partners made a point of launching their company on the technological vanguard: they issued laptops and palm pilots to their sales team and developed a website that was ahead of its time in providing virtual tours and online scheduling. The company's first-year sales volume was about \$350m. Today, it has over 300 employees and annual brokerage sales volume in excess of \$1.3bn.

Other ventures for Conlon have included the formation of Conlon & Co (USA) to provide property consulting and financing services. In 2004, in partnership with Daniel Fowler, he acquired Near North National Title, a national property title company established in 1988 which handles over \$5.5bn in property transactions annually across the US.

In less than a decade, Conlon has become recognised as one of the top property experts in the country, and is frequently featured on CNN and CNBC, as well as in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, discussing market trends within the global property sector.

In 2006, he featured in the 60-minute RTÉ television documentary *Made in America* that focused on successful emigrants from Ireland and their triumphant business successes. The documentary highlighted Conlon's story of an aggressive work ethic, ambition and astonishing achievements.

In 2007, he announced a joint venture with Investor First, the successful Dublin-based property investment and development company. The partnership, to be called Conlon & Co (Ireland), aims

to team Conlon's expertise in the US market with the investment and development firm. The new business will originate, structure and deliver off-market US property opportunities to Irish private client companies and individual high net worth investors.

#### TOM COSTELLO



Tom Costello is the managing director at **John Sisk & Son Ltd**, the largest general contracting company in Ireland with turnover in excess of €1.2bn. The company is part of Sicon (the Sisk Group), and has offices in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Sligo, Dundalk and Waterford.

Sisk has been involved in nearly every major development and refurbishment around the country, including the restoration and refurbishment of historic buildings, such as the Customs House, the Meriton Hotel and the Royal Hospital in Kilmalsham. The company is also involved in major residential developments, such as Hanover Quay in Dublin's Docklands, and the refurbishment of Croke Park.

One of its biggest landmark developments was the Dundrum Town Centre in 2005 – the largest commercial development in Ireland and one of the most comprehensive suburban regeneration schemes ever undertaken in either Ireland or the UK. During

construction, Sisk provided 100 management personnel, as well as an onsite workforce of 1,600 to complete the development of the 17-acre site valued at €420m. The company won numerous awards for it, including International Shopping Centre of the Year by Retail and Leisure International in the UK and the Gold Award for Outstanding Retail Development from the British Council for Shopping Centres.

In 2006, work commenced on the M8/N8 Cullabhill-Cashel project which, at 40km, is the longest new road to be built in Ireland. The development was part of an attempt to bring the inter-urban connection between Dublin and Cork closer, and is due to be completed by 2009 with a substantial fee of €434m.

In November 2007, following an intensive international tender contest, it was announced that the €365m Lansdowne Road refurbishment project was awarded to John Sisk & Son. In May, it was awarded the contract for a new commuter rail station on the Kildare to Dublin line and, throughout the year, has been involved in the National Convention Centre at Dublin Docklands in a joint venture with Treasury Holdings.

Costello qualified as a civil engineer in 1979 from NUI Galway. Originally from Mayo, he spent 20 years working in the west with Sisk before a short period in Nigeria where it is also headquartered. Tom Costello was appointed a director in 1996, and managing director in 1999. He is married with four children.

#### HARRY CROSBIE

Harry Crosbie is a prolific Irish property entrepreneur who is chairman and a large shareholder in the **Point Village**. He also holds an