

## NORTHERN IRELAND INFORMATION NEWSHEET

### ECONOMICS

#### Unemployment

Seasonally adjusted unemployment has fallen for 8 out of the last 12 months and stands at 11.2% for July 1996. Long term unemployment (ie those out of work for more than a year) and youth unemployment continue to show decreases over the year.

#### Output

Manufacturing output is continuing on the general upward trend it has been exhibiting since the end of 1991. Over the year to March 1996, Northern Ireland manufacturing experienced a rise in output of 1.2% compared with a rise of 0.8% in the UK as a whole.

#### Reports/Surveys

The latest CBI and Business Strategies Limited (BSL) Survey reveals manufacturers' confidence in Northern Ireland is the most buoyant of all the regions in the UK. There was a strong growth in new orders which far outstripped that in the UK as a whole, while output increased at a strong rate against the national trend. Also, in contrast to other regions in the UK, employment estimates suggest jobs will increase in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Economic Research Council and Oxford Economic Forecasting forecast suggests that Northern Ireland is expected to continue as the UK's third fastest growing region. They estimate GDP growth of 2.5% this year, in line with the UK average, rising to 3.3% in 1997 and 2.9% in 1998. Even if violence returns, it is not expected to lead to a dramatic downturn in overall economic activity.

A survey by the Chartered Institute of Marketing indicates that the Northern Ireland Economy is set for a spurt of growth ahead of the national average. The survey, conducted among 250 marketing executives throughout a wide spread of manufacturing and service industries shows confidence higher than at any time in the past year.

The European Business Survey, which covered small and medium-sized businesses, identified Northern Ireland as one of the 3 UK regions most likely to develop new markets. Such firms were more likely to acquire new companies and diversify their product range than those in Britain.

The results of a University of Ulster Survey indicate that house prices in Northern Ireland continued to rise dramatically in the second quarter of 1996. The average price of a house in the NI quarterly House Price Index was more than 11% higher than in the same period last year. At the same time, Northern Ireland Court Service statistics revealed that the number of mortgages cases coming before the courts has fallen to its lowest level for many years.

#### INDUSTRIAL

Shorts is to be part of a team led by British Aerospace which will build 25 Nimrod fighter planes, securing work for up to 200 people. The contract represents part of defence orders worth £4 billion. Shorts has also delivered the first all-composite rudder for the Boeing 737 Next Generation airliner. It has been the sole supplier of the rudder for the Boeing 737.

Mackie International will create nearly 100 new jobs over 3 years through an IDB-backed investment of £14.5m.

Dairy Produce Packers, Coleraine may create up to 50 new jobs in a £7m investment to cope with growth by McDonald's, its biggest customer.

Walter Alexander, bus builder, has helped boost half year pre-tax profits for its English parent company to a high of £10.2m.

Pleroma Distribution Ltd, the company which owns Uniport and Monaghan Mushrooms, is to build a new multi-million pound food depot in Northern Ireland. The expansion stems from a deal signed with Sainsbury's which makes Pleroma responsible for delivering all of their Irish fresh food produce.

Thrige-Scott are creating 17 new jobs, through investing in a £1.7m project to build electric motors, 95% of which are likely to be destined for export markets.

Kainos, a Belfast software company, developed the network modelling technology used to keep the lights on during the recent Olympic Games in Atlanta for its parent company, ICL, who sold it to Georgia Power.

MJM Marine, Rathfriland, has just completed a major refurbishment contract worth nearly £750k on St Patrick 11, the flagship of the Irish Ferries Fleet. Over 100 additional people were involved due to the 3 week time scale for the contract.

PHM Electronics, a Londonderry based security company, has won two major contracts worth a total of £500k to provide alarm systems for Imperial Tobaccos and Carr's Tobacco.

#### TOURISM

Work is to begin on a £2m tourist development at Inishclare on the shores of Lough Erne. The planned development, which will create 25 full time and part time jobs, will include a marina which can cater for 10 large cruisers, a 90 seater restaurant and a 110 seat bar and bistro.

Galgorm Manor plans a £4m development to add a new conference suite and increase the number of bedrooms to 81. This will also create 25 jobs.

Work is due to begin in the Spring on a new £5m hotel for Ballycastle, creating approximately 80 new jobs, peaking at 200 in the holiday season.

Mivan has won the £15m contract to build the Belfast Hilton. Construction is expected to take 2 years, with up to 100 building jobs created. This will be the biggest contract signed so far in Northern Ireland for Mivan. Mivan has also won a contract for 3 high-rise apartment buildings in Jakarta, Indonesia.

#### OTHER

Construct 96, an exhibition to be held in November, is set to be the biggest construction industry event ever staged in Belfast. Extra space is having to be created to cope with increased demand for exhibition space.