

Editor's choice

Restoring confidence is, everyone agrees, the order of the day in the Irish economy. In an in-depth interview with *AB Ireland*, the minister for finance explains why he believes he has taken the necessary steps to bring this about. Meanwhile, a special focus on the IFSC reminds us that Ireland still has a great deal to offer the international financial community. I've highlighted some articles you shouldn't miss below

INVESTING IN OUR FINANCIAL SERVICES OFFER

As we enter a period of nervous growth in the major international economies, we are hopeful that a lift in the global economy will help an open economy like Ireland's, which is heavily dependent on selling goods and services internationally. One of our great recent success stories, in terms of employment numbers and quality of employment, has been the financial services industry. In 2007, there were almost 150,000 people employed in this area in Ireland. While this number has, undoubtedly, fallen, it remains a key sector for employment growth in the coming months and years. In fact, when other service providers to financial services are included (e.g. lawyers, auditors, tax advisers and IT) the importance of the sector is all the more visible.

The real question now is: what do we need to do to make our economy more attractive to this type of economic activity? The first thing is, undoubtedly, to have credibility in our standing as a global centre for international financial services. While user friendly practices and regulations are desirable, if they are too user friendly, then the governance regime can be badly exposed. This is where we have found ourselves in recent times. Our Government has moved to address this and it is no coincidence that our new Central Bank governor and financial regulator are more active than their predecessors.

The second initiative required is to ensure we have adequate numbers of highly-trained graduates in the areas of finance, derivatives and languages. An investment in education and training now should ensure a supply of highly-trained graduates when the bounce in economic activity filters through.

Many other positives remain for Ireland as a destination for financial services. These include:

- * A trained workforce at the higher value-added end of economic activity;
- * An English-speaking workforce;
- * A low corporate-tax regime; and,
- * A Government that welcomes and facilitates inward investment.

In the midst of the current despair, it is easy to overlook what we have going for us in a key high-end global business. Yes, we need to rebuild our reputation for control and governance, and, as we have seen with one of our large insurers, this is not necessarily going to be universally welcomed either.

International financial services have been, and will continue to be, a key sector for growth in Ireland and I welcome the focus on the area in this month's *AB Ireland*.

Brian McEnergy
President, ACCA Ireland



MONEY MAN

In an in-depth interview, the minister for finance explains why he believes he has taken the right actions for the Irish economy
Page 12

SAFE HARBOUR

A unique success story, the IFSC has evolved from derelict warehouses to one of Europe's most important financial centres
Page 21

THE CLOUD

The first of what will be a regular series of technology-focused articles with the needs of accountants in mind
Page 45

SLIP UPS

A look at some interesting company law slip-ups in audit files courtesy of Mercia Ireland's team of accounting consultants
Page 52

FEELING EXPOSED

Managing dismissals in any business needs careful consideration, particularly in these financially pressing times
Page 57