

Speech for Aidan Mangan - Southern Construct

Members, Delegates, President CIF and other dignitaries, I am delighted as Chairman of the Cork Branch of the Construction Industry Federation to welcome you to today's Southern Construct summit.

It is the first time that we have held such a conference in the City and we would like to thank iQuest and the Sunday Business Post for all their assistance and support in organising today's event.

It is certainly an exciting line up of speakers, discussing issues effecting the industry and we would hope that everyone attending today walks away having learnt something and that you will have made further business connections that will enhance your own business.

In many respects Cork is on the cusp of exciting developments. Less than 100 yards from where we are today there are very significant regeneration and rejuvenation projects ongoing. These are the 250,000 sq. ft office complex in Penrose Quay, the Hotel, offices and apartments in Horgan's Quay, the offices at Navigation House, the proposal for a 15 storey office building just behind me, the proposal for a 34 storey Tower less than 50 yards to my right.

These are all very exciting proposals but we must not forget the infrastructure that is required to support further regeneration and development. That is why the announcement that the Dunkettle Project had been delayed was such a disappointment to the industry. It was going to be one of the most significant strategic infrastructure projects undertaken in our Region in a long number of years and would have created further private sector development opportunities in our City Centre and around Dunkettle. This project must now proceed as a matter of urgency. In fact, the Dunkettle Interchange, the N28 and the M20 are by far and away the most needed transportation infrastructural projects in the Country. They allow for sustainable development initiatives in our City Centre and provide the ease of access to the Port which is our closest multi-modal port to Continental Europe and by far and away our second biggest Port in terms of ship movement. It provides ease of access to Cork Airport for users of the airport from other Counties and Regions, it allows further residential developments in Carrigaline, Dunkettle and as said already the Port of Cork site in Cork City Centre. They also provide greater ease of access for the largest concentration of Life Sciences, Pharma and Bio-Tech cluster in Ireland.

It is incredible that these projects have been delayed as long as they have been delayed and they must now be progressed at a pace and an urgency not seen over the last 10 years for transportation projects in this Region. When speaking of key infrastructural projects for our Region, we must not forget the Event Centre. The Event Centre is another example of a key public / private infrastructural project that will create further projects in the City Centre, especially in the hotel and leisure sector.

We know that many hotel projects are currently stalled awaiting funding for our Event Centre to come through. We support everyone involved in the project and look forward to a speedy resolution of the planning and funding issues that are currently delaying this project. Everyone must work together in the planning and funding process to ensure that it can now progress as a matter of urgency.

Speaking as a mechanical contractor, we must not forget our small and medium sized enterprises in our Sector that are currently struggling with significant increases in their cost base. Be that labour, materials or a nervousness in investment decisions surrounding Brexit, we are seeing a significant delays, for want of a better word, in our order books at the moment.

Right across our industry members are reporting that this is a nervous time. Hence, my plea this morning for everyone here to maintain discussion about the major public infrastructural projects that are planned for our Region, as there will never be a better time to invest in the construction sector.

This industry now needs the much vaunted counter-cyclical investment to ensure that we maintain a steady pipeline of work.

I am also particularly delighted to welcome our President, Pat Lucey of Sisk. Pat is a proud Cork man and I would now ask you to give a warm round of applause to Pat Lucey.