

Businesses say prices will fall as deflation hits the economy

IRISH firms expect prices to fall this year for the first time since the Second World War. An international study has also found Irish privately-held businesses (PHBs) are the most pessimistic in Europe and anticipate overall price deflation of almost 1.5 per cent this year. The results come from the Grant Thornton International Business Report which surveyed more than 7,200 PHBs in 36 economies. Irish PHBs are also anticipating a serious decline in turnover and profitability and regionally the EU emerged as the gloomiest trading bloc in the survey with regard to turnover.

Japanese firms to boost jobs

JAPANESE companies are to make five investments in Ireland, creating around 150 jobs. Online games firm Gala is to expand its European headquarters in Dublin's Digital Hub, adding 50 jobs, while internet security company Trend is to recruit 100 people over the next three years in an expansion of its Cork operation. The three other investments are in research and development. Alps is to set up a project to design new car safety technology for the European market, while Shimadzu is collaborating with The Applied Optics Group in NUIG Galway in the area of imaging techniques.

Finance staff worry the most

IRISH finance workers are the most concerned about the economy. A survey from Robert Half International carried out at the end of last year in 14 countries found 93 per cent of finance professionals were very or rather concerned about the health of the global economy and 94 per cent concerned about the national economy. Despite this concern Irish respondents from all those surveyed did not feel that morale in the workplace would be affected. Also unlike all other countries no respondents in Ireland were concerned about the imminent departure of the baby boomer generation, which had previously been more of an issue.

Far East launch

BERKLEY has become the first Irish recruitment firm to establish a base in Singapore as part of a multi-million euro investment that could eventually create up to 60 jobs. The company, which is based in Cork, is also planning to open other offices as a subsidiary of its Singapore base over the coming years in locations such as China and Taiwan.

IN PROFILE – Entrepreneur Sinead O'Moore

# Ceramics make a statement for Irish designer

Passionate about pottery Sinead O'Moore decided to make her craft her trade. She set up a one-woman business creating trendy vases and tealights to sell at market. They are now a global success.

BY FIONA AUDLEY

LOW LIGHTS and high vases are winging their way across the globe since an Irish entrepreneur turned her lifelong hobby into a successful business.

Just two years ago Sinead O'Moore decided to change her career in order to follow her childhood dream of creating ceramics. And so the Co. Wicklow native, who has been living in London and working in high-end retail design for seven years, channelled that creative spirit to embark upon a college course where she could hone the skills that would make her dream a reality.

In a relatively short space of time the determined designer, now 35, has completed her course, converted her spare room into a studio in which to cultivate her craft and seen her unique creations snapped up across the globe. She explained: "I have loved ceramics since I was a child, growing up in Bray, Co. Wicklow. "It wasn't unusual as I come from a very creative family — my father was an engineer, my sister a fashion designer and my brother an architect.

"But when I left school I had to decide whether to follow the ceramics route or go into design.

"I chose design, taking a four-year course in Environmental Design — which included interiors, exhibitions, TV sets and theatre — at Dublin's Institute of Technology.

"I felt that was the more logical choice as there would be a higher job prospect at the end." But after spending time in her chosen career, working in retail design and exhibition halls in Australia, Dublin and London, Sinead took a "leap of nerves" and ventured back to her artistic roots.

She now hand-makes hundreds of beautiful clay and porcelain pieces every week and — as a sole trader — brings them to her public via the internet or London's quirky Greenwich Market, where she has a regular Saturday stall.

And the weekend browsers are lapping up the intricate tealights and statement earthenware vases which are the stamps of

her collection.

Sinead said: "In 2006 I started to think seriously about ceramics once again. I made the change of path, from the retail design work, as I wanted to do something that I was happy in and something that I have always been passionate about.

"It has been a huge leap of nerves but I wouldn't swap it. I get a lot out of being in control of my own time and producing my own work." She added: "My background has helped me immensely though — if I had done a ceramics course first and not the design, things probably would have been completely different — working in the retail sector first makes you a lot more aware of the fact that, as well as being creative, you must be in tune with the market and its processes."

As a result Sinead's relatively late start-up has benefited greatly from the experience her years have afforded her. She said: "Starting my business aged 33 proved a good thing for me, as I am now much better at managing myself and the business and outlining the goals that I need to reach.

"I also have been lucky to have the financial support of my partner John and a room in our home which we have converted into a studio.

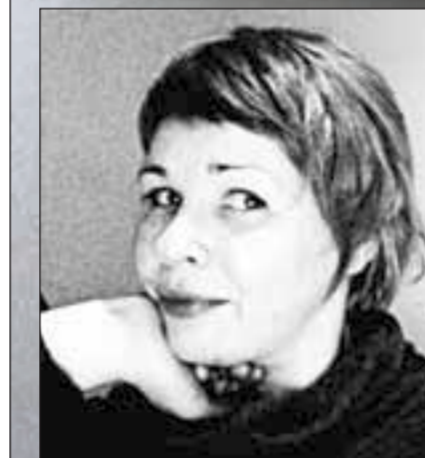
"There I make all my work and can do so into the early hours of the morning should I need to — there are no schedule restraints upon me."

Sinead currently lives in Lon-

Business fact file...

**Name:** Sinead O'Moore  
**Age:** 35  
**Hometown:** Bray, Co. Wicklow  
**Time in London:** Seven years  
**First job:** Working in riding stables — for free riding lessons  
**Current role:** Founder and producer of Sinead O'Moore Ceramics  
**Career high:** "Selling my first vase — I always get a bigger buzz when someone buys a vase as they are a bigger statement."  
**Career low:** "When somebody bumped my market stall at the end of a long day and five vases smashed on the floor — but I learnt from that... to weight the vases."  
**Ultimate business goal:** "To be making products that I am artistically happy with and that are successful."  
**Business ethos:** "I will never sell anything that I am not happy with — everything has to be to a standard that I would expect if I was buying something."

don's Dalston. And it's there that the increasing demand for her delicate yet functional items keeps her busy throughout the week as she makes, fires and finishes the ceramic pieces, arranges her marketing and admin and takes online orders for customers around the globe.



TALL AND EDGY: A selection of her vases and (inset) Sinead O'Moore.

Tips for success

- Believe in yourself and have faith in what you are doing.
- Do market research and see if it is a viable product that will sell.
- Get advice from people who have more knowledge and listen to it.

But on Saturdays the artist leaves the studio, laden with her lovingly-crafted wares, to set up stall at Greenwich Market for a 10-hour stint.

"It takes about a week to make 150 tealights and six or seven vases," Sinead explains.

"So Monday and Tuesday are big production days for me — the process of making ceramics sees the pieces go through two firings, but you have to glaze and refine the piece between each firing.

"I also sand a lot of my pieces to give them that tactile finish so it is a fairly long process.

"The end of the week is when I will deal with more of the admin, marketing and other preparations and on Saturday I go to the market at 8.30am and finish at around 6pm.

"I would usually bring about 10-15 vases and 100 tealights to sell on a Saturday."

The items — tealights which resemble delicate eggshells so much so that customers are afraid to touch them and vases which are tall and trendy yet distressed and edgy — are inspired by an interesting mix of architecture and nature, according to their creator.

And they have proven a big hit with both market regulars and those far further afield. Sinead explained: "My inspiration for my work comes from architecture — which I love — and nature, where I can find inspiration in everything.

"But selling my work has definitely been a learning curve and the pieces I produce now are very different to what I had at the start."

She added: "I was actually initially surprised at how well the pieces were received at the market, but my confidence has grown and through the feedback

I have received I am now aware that it is a good product.

"But it is always flattering to have somebody else buy something that you have made."

And at a cost of just £20 for three tealights or £45-75 for a vase, Sinead's work seems likely to continue to adorn the mantelpieces of homes world-wide well into the future.

"A lot of my products, especially the little tealights, are bought as gifts," Sinead said.

"But my price range means that you can buy a luxury item without it being overpriced, which is particularly important at the moment.

"I don't want my pieces to be out of people's budgets.

"I have even had online orders from customers as far as Canada and Israel and all over Europe, which is great."

And with galleries in the North of Ireland and Surrey

already approaching the rising entrepreneur about her distinctive clay collections, Sinead O'Moore ceramics seem a trend set to stay for 2009.

For more details or to view Sinead's work visit her website [www.sineadmoore.com](http://www.sineadmoore.com)

The burning question...

**Is entrepreneurialism born or bred?**  
■ Sinead says: "I think it's something that would be in somebody from birth but life experience may make the difference as to whether you go for it. "Either way I do believe it is something that is there from the beginning — if it's not, no amount of training is going to instill that in you."

# High rents blamed for Dublin's higher prices



The differing prices (in euros)

DUBLINERS are paying significantly more for haircuts, rashers and lager but self-raising flour, ham fillets and sirloin steaks are cheaper in the capital than the rest of the country.

New figures show on average the prices of 51 items out of 79 were higher in Dublin than in the rest of Ireland, with the differences ranging from 50 per cent more to 16.3 per cent less.

At €7.82 a wash, cut and blow dry cost on average 50 per cent more in Dublin for men and 25 per cent for women at €45.78. The price of rashers at €14.52 was 37 per cent dearer in the capital while a pint of lager at €4.85 costs 12.5 per cent more.

The figures, from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show the price difference between Dublin and the rest of the country has dropped 0.4 per cent over the last six months, bringing the price difference to 4.5 per cent.

When pub prices are excluded the variation drops to 1.6 per cent.

Prices in Dublin pubs were 9.4 per cent higher in Dublin than outside. The greatest difference was for a pint of

BY NIAMH HENNESSY

lager where the average price was 12.5 per cent higher in Dublin.

A pint of stout at €4.35 was almost 10 per cent higher while a single measure of vodka at €4.05 in Dublin was 8.1 per cent more expensive.

A trip to the cinema was 10.5 per cent more in Dublin while cigarette prices were 0.1 per cent higher.

Nine of the ten fruit and vegetable items checked were more expensive in Dublin than in the rest of the country.

The differences ranged from mushrooms being 10.2 per cent more expensive to grapes, which were 3.8 per cent cheaper.

Chief executive of Dublin Chamber Gina Quinn blamed the high Dublin prices on local authority charges and rents.

"Tight competition helps to drive down the difference in prices but so long as Dublin businesses face higher business costs they will continue," she said.

The survey, which was carried out in May last year found items such as milk, cheese, bread and sugar were cheaper in Dublin.

■ SPAGHETTI: Dublin: 1.20. Rest of country: 1.28. Difference: -6.5 per cent  
■ PINT OF CIDER: Dublin: 4.96. Rest of country: 4.45. Difference: 11.4 per cent  
■ CINEMA TICKET: Dublin: 9.25. Rest of country: 8.37. Difference: 10.5 per cent  
■ SIRLOIN STEAK: Dublin: 14.46. Rest of country: 16.04. Difference: -9.9 per cent  
■ TINNED TOMATOES: Dublin: 88c. Rest of country: 80c. Difference: 10 per cent

Diesel however was 0.7 per cent higher in Dublin while petrol was 0.1 per cent higher. Average diesel prices were €1.13 per litre in Dublin compared to €1.12 outside. The average petrol price in Dublin was €1.116 per litre compared to €1.115 outside of Dublin.

# Ryanair to net £650million from additional fees

THE CREDIT crunch doesn't seem to have affected Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary with news that the airline is expected to rake in £650million this year — solely from additional charges on its flights.

The prediction was made in a report published by the Telegraph this week, which showed that the airline's charge for checking in a bag for a flight is now six times higher than in 2006.

The airline has increased its fees for putting a case in the hold to £30 for a return flight — up from £5 three years ago.

Last year the airline carried 58million passengers. Assuming similar numbers this year, with around half its passengers still checking in at least one bag per flight, it stands to make at least £43million in baggage fees.

This is based on passengers taking the cheapest option of booking online and carrying only one bag.

These charges rise to £60 for those who do not check in online or to £50 for two bags checked in.

Ryanair has also increased its fees for booking to £10 per person per return flight, up from €3.50 in 2006 and €8 last year.

The charges apply even if flights are bought in a single transaction, which leaves a family of four facing a £40 charge just for paying by card.

The only exception made is to those who pay by Visa Electron, for whom the airline is not applying a debit charge for a "limited special offer period".

A Ryanair spokesman said that 25 per cent of its bookings are made with Visa Electron cards.

By this reckoning, from the 75 per cent of passengers who pay with other cards, the airline stands to receive around £217million from card charges alone, bringing its total revenue from additional charges this year to over £650million.



FEE AND EASY: Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary.