

Douglas Wallace Architects Completes Refurbishment of Bank of Ireland at Eyre Square, Galway

(August 2003) - Bank of Ireland's has recently opened the doors of its new flagship branch at Eyre Square, Galway. The refurbishment was sensitively designed and project managed by Douglas Wallace Architects under the direction of Bank of Ireland Group Architects and Facilities Department (ROI). Construction work was carried out by TBD Developments Ltd.

This historical and listed building is a renowned landmark in Eyre Square and has been occupied by Bank of Ireland since 1830. The architect James Cusack originally designed the building on the site of the old corn and potato market

A total of €4m+ was spent on the refurbishment the branch. Bank of Ireland Eyre Square is the largest Bank of Ireland in the West and second biggest BOI in the Ireland with over 40,000 customers and 70 staff.

Michael Noone, Branch Manager at Bank of Ireland Galway is justifiably proud of the bank's refurbishment, "We are exceptionally delighted to re-open this prestigious brand which will allow us to lead the way in terms of providing the highest quality of service to our customers".

"We are particularly pleased with the overall result which will offer our staff a substantially enhanced working environment and our customers a new experience in branch banking," said Mr. Noone.

The new branch has been designed to facilitate the changing needs of modern banking and to fulfill customer expectations. The design enables easy access to products and services, information and advice – all in an enhanced retail and business environment. This contemporary environment sits comfortably within its original and historic building shell – which still retains the reassuring external appearance it had when the bank first opened its doors here 173 years ago.

Hugh Wallace, CEO, Douglas Wallace said: "This upgrading and modernisation of our new Bank of Ireland in Eyre Square underpins the fact that the psychology of banking has changed. Our aim is to personalise the customers banking experience with less counters and more one-to-one consultancy areas, creating a more customer friendly environment."

Ground Floor

Bank of Ireland has opened the ground floor as a trading area incorporating various consultancy areas. All the cash transactions on the ground floor area are automated to enable an efficient response to customer enquiries. Reception is located at a service counter where customer enquiries can be streamlined towards the appropriate members of staff who deal loans, mortgages and pensions.

At the front of the building there is a 24 hr ABC (Automatic Business Centre) at ground floor. This area to ensure the business person is not delayed and provides speed, security and flexibility to these clients.

First Floor

A new stairs has been built and lift access has been provided in order to improve access for people with disabilities. The first floor has a banking hall with some informal consultancy areas. The business suites are located at the old part of the building on the first floor overlooking Eyre Square. A separate entry from Eyre Street leads to the business suites. Two of the rooms can be opened up into one large room to facilitate a number of functions from training to corporate entertaining.

Conservation Issues

Robin Mandel, Historic Building Consultant & Head of the Conservation Architects Association in Ireland was appointed by Douglas Wallace to ensure that good conservation practice be utilised while refurbishment of 43 Eyre Square was being carried out.

Robin Mandel said "Bank of Ireland on Eyre Square is a building of regional importance. The structure was listed in the Development Plan, and under the 1999 Planning Act, has become a Protected Structure including the interiors and objects within the curtilage. The building was in good condition, however the refurbishment was reasonable and necessary for the long-term survival of the structure.

Interior

The interior is smart, contemporary, clean. It heralds a move away from mahogany and leather to contemporary clean bright look with a lot of surfaces to hang art work. The design is a fresh, contemporary reinterpretation of a bank interior with colour used to highlight strategic areas. The design of the reception area on the ground floor is such that it directs customers into a point of contact with the reception area. The large reception desk was considered vitally important in the design process as the ground floor area is primarily focused on the service aspect. The interior reflects this change in psychology or ethos in the way the bank will do business in the future.

Douglas Wallace Architects commenced work on the building last September and it was completed within nine months in May 2003.

Ends

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