Ibec release Q4 Outlook

Ibec, a group that represents Irish business, has just released its Q4 Economic Outlook.

In the report, the group have revised its GDP annual growth forecast for 2015. GDP growth is now set at 7.1% (volume terms) and 11.7% (value terms) for the year. This is due to the fact that consumer activity has been stronger than expected. Ireland, in fact, has the fastest growing advanced economy in the world this year.

The report also suggested an increase in both public and private investment in areas such as education, health, housing, roads and transport. This is will help avoid “choking the positive economic momentum”.

Some other key points made in the report include: debt to GDP ratio will fall below 100% this year, and below 90% next year; value of Irish exports rose 24% this year; unemployment will fall below 8% by end of 2016; and the tax take was €3bn ahead of the expected figure.

Ibec’s Chief Economist Fergal O’Brien noted that instead of the stunted economy many people expected, “we have plummeting debt levels and staggering growth”. However, “many of the factors driving the strong growth are external and temporary”. Therefore, we should be planning ahead.

Adverse weather continues, warning lowered

The National Coordination Group on Recent Severe Weather met again yesterday to discuss the on-going adverse weather conditions affecting the whole of the country.

They said that all relevant local authorities are responding in affected areas, and are vigilant for situations as they arise. They will be tackling the situation with the help of the Defence Forces.

Met Éireann will be releasing weather reports for specific areas, as well as generally, and this will be updated frequently.

The ESB have warned that areas around Lough Derg in the Midlands has an increased depth and flow level following Storm Desmond, and they are monitoring the situation.

The Government will be administering a fund of €5m to small businesses affected by flooding. This will be administered by the Red Cross and only companies in areas designated at risk of flooding by the OPW may be considered. There are also funds available to householders whose houses were affected by the weather. The Department of Social Protection will provide Humanitarian Assistance Scheme funds to those that qualify.

The current National Weather warning stands at a Yellow level—the lowest level of warning. You can find the latest weather and warning reports on Met Éireann’s website, met.ie.
INMO’s planned industrial action has been called off. The rolling two-hour work stoppages will not be taking place in the seven emergency departments previously planned for.

This comes as talks between the HSE and the nurses’ union reached a point of agreement last night (Monday, 14 December). The deal struck between them will include one additional day of leave for emergency department nurses in both 2016 and 2017, credit and allowances for educational achievements, promotions for nurses in emergency departments, and pay for student nurses. This deal will be subject to future ballot.

Other public service groups have criticised the deal, paying particular attention to the extra leave proposed. These days will be described as “toil” and are given in lieu of meal breaks. There are questions about whether or not this can be “ring-fenced” for 1,100 emergency department nurses. Senior members of other unions have said they may put forward applications for such leave days for their members.

Contingency plans were in place to ensure that no one in need of urgent care would be neglected.

Despite emergency rooms remaining open, hundreds of out-patient appointments and procedures were cancelled or postponed in the seven affected hospitals.

Dublin City Council has released plans for the “immediate development” of over 30 hectares of land to meet the high need for housing. It will be presented to councillors this week.

The plan, which includes 1,300 houses, will be the largest undertaken by a local authority since the crash. The council hopes to recoup the €8m investment with the sale of private housing.

The three vacant areas to be developed are on the Oscar Traynor Rd in Coolock, O’Devaney Gardens near the Phoenix Park, and St Michael’s Estate in Inchicore.

There will be 655 homes built on the Coolock site. Of the first stages of this, 46 will be social housing, 182 will be starter homes or market value homes and 79 will avail of the affordable rental scheme announced in the budget. These will be provided at 30% of the tenant’s income, or 20% of market value, whichever is smallest.

The O’Devaney Gardens will see a quarter of its houses given over to this scheme. There are 398 houses proposed for the site. There are 300 units planned for St Michael’s Estate, almost all of which will be private. This is in addition to the 75 completed last year on the estate.
This week at Public Affairs Ireland

On the Blog

The International Protection Bill 2015: A Practitioner’s Perspective
Stephen Collins
Read here

Should Government give a further boost to Capital Investment?
Tom Ferris
Read here

Ireland’s social progress lags behind its economic growth
PAI editor Shauna Nimmo
Read here

Irish refugee legislation: moving towards a fair and fast process
PAI editor Shauna Nimmo
Read here

Irish Budget has been approved by the European Commission
Tom Ferris
Read here

For 2016

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Monday 14 December

12.00 noon
Courts Bill 2015 [Seanad] - All Stages (to conclude after 3 hours if not previously concluded)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

Motion re Prisons Bill 2015 (Seanad) (to conclude within 1 hour)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

Prisons Bill 2015 [Seanad] - All Stages (to conclude after 3 hours if not previously concluded)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

7.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Tuesday 15 December

11.00 a.m.
Bankruptcy (Amendment) Bill 2015 - All Stages (to conclude within 3 hours)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

2.00 p.m.
Questions (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources)

3.15 p.m.
Leaders Questions

3.36 p.m.
Questions (Taoiseach)

4.36 p.m.
Order of Business

5.06 p.m.
Topical Issues

Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2015 (Seanad) - Report and Final Stages (resumed, to conclude at 8.30pm if not previously concluded)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

8.30 p.m.
Private Members Business - (Fianna Fáil)

10.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Wednesday 16 December

9.30 a.m.
Questions (Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport)

10.45 a.m.
International Protection Bill 2015 [Seanad] - Committee and Remaining Stages (to conclude at 5.30pm if not previously concluded)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad] - Committee and Remaining Stages (to conclude at 8.30pm if not previously concluded)
(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government)

12.00 noon
Leaders Questions

12.21 p.m.
Order of Business

Pre European Council Statements (to conclude within 65 minutes)

1.56 p.m.
SOS (1 hour)

2.56 p.m.
Topical Issues

3.44 p.m.
Morning Business continued

8.30 p.m.
Private Members Business - (Fianna Fáil)

10.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Thursday 17 December

9.30 a.m.
Questions (Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade)

10.45 a.m.
Electoral (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2015 - Amendments from the Seanad (to conclude 12pm if not previously concluded)
(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government)

Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Bill 2013 - Amendments from the Seanad (to conclude after 3 hours if not previously concluded)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

Technological Universities Bill 2015 - Order for Second Stage and Second Stage
(Department of Education and Skills)

12.00 noon
Leaders Questions

12.21 noon
Order of Business

Motion re Framework Agreement with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Back from Committee) (without Debate)
(Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

Motion re Ratification of UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (without Debate)
(Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht)

Motion re Exempted Development Regulations (Back from Committee without Debate)
(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government)

12.41 p.m.
Morning Business Continued

6.00 p.m.
Topical Issues

6.48 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns
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<td>Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Bill 2013 – Report and Final Stages</td>
<td>Harbours Bill 2015 – Committee and Remaining Stages</td>
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<td>International Protection Bill 2015 - Report Stage (Amendments from Dáil Éireann)</td>
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<td>Motion regarding the arrangements for the sitting of the House on Friday, 18 December</td>
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<td>Motion regarding Exempted Development Regulations – back from Committee without Debate</td>
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<td>Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 – Order for Second Stage and Second Stage</td>
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<td>Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 2008 – Report Stage (Amendments from Dáil Éireann)</td>
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This week’s Committee Meetings

Tuesday 15 December

Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 1.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: (i) Scrutiny of EU legislative proposals:
EWN(2015)C 355-07; and
(ii) The IDA Ireland Annual Report 2014 [Representative from IDA Ireland]

Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 2 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: The Irish Harness Racing Industry (resumed) [Representatives from Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) and Horse Sport Ireland (HSI)]

Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 2.15 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: (i) Motion re: Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2015 [Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Rural Economic Development issues]; and (ii) Pre-Legislative Scrutiny on the General Scheme of the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2015 (resumed) [Mr. Damian Allen, Ms. Sheila Power and Mr. Andrew Harkin, Housing Division, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; Mr. Kieron Brennan, Chief Executive, Co-operative Housing Ireland; Mr. Donal McManus, Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Karen Murphy, Director of Policy and Mr. Justin O’Brien, President, Irish Council for Social Housing]

Justice, Defence and Equality (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 9.30 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Session A: 9.30 a.m.
Welfare of ex-service personnel of the Irish Defence Forces [Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel and Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA)]; and
Session B: 2.30 p.m.
Report of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate - Changing Policing in Ireland [Representatives from the Garda Inspectorate]; and
Session C: 3.30 p.m.
The Parole Board - Annual Report 2014 [Representatives from the Parole Board]

Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 9.45 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Potential benefits of natural gas as a transport fuel [Representatives from Gas Networks Ireland]

Foreign Affairs and Trade (Select)
CR3, LH 2000 9.45 a.m. (T)

Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 12 noon (T)
AGENDA: Public Transport Bill 2015 [Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport]

European Union Affairs (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 12.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: European Court of Auditors Annual Report 2014 [Mr. Kevin Cardiff, Member of the European Court of Auditors]

Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 2.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Review of the Credit Union Sector in Ireland (resumed) [Ms. Anne Marie McKiernan, Registrar of Credit Unions]

Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 11.15 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Current developments in Northern Ireland with specific reference to the Fresh Start Agreement [Minister of State with special responsibility for ODA, Trade Promotion and North South Co-operation]

Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 2.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Update on Bus Eireann’s inter-urban and expressway services [Representatives from Bus Eireann]

Thursday 17 December

Health and Children (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 11.15 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Session A: 11.15 a.m.
Report on the Reconfiguration of Acute Hospital Services in Cork and Kerry [Mr. Michael O’Flynn, Chairman, Non-Executive Advisory Board on the Reconfiguration of Acute Hospital Services in Cork and Kerry]; and
Session B: 12.30 p.m.
Update from Emergency Department Taskforce on overcrowding in A&E Departments [Mr. Tony O’Brien, Chairman, ED Taskforce]

AGENDA: Current developments in Northern Ireland with specific reference to the Fresh Start Agreement [Minister of State with special responsibility for ODA, Trade Promotion and North South Co-operation]

Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 2.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Update on Bus Eireann’s inter-urban and expressway services [Representatives from Bus Eireann]

Wednesday 16 December

Justice, Defence and Equality (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 9.30 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Session A: 9.30 a.m.
Session B: 2.30 p.m.
Report of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate - Changing Policing in Ireland [Representatives from the Garda Inspectorate]; and
The Parole Board - Annual Report 2014 [Representatives from the Parole Board]

Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 9.45 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Potential benefits of natural gas as a transport fuel [Representatives from Gas Networks Ireland]

Foreign Affairs and Trade (Select)
CR3, LH 2000 9.45 a.m. (T)

Foreign Affairs and Trade (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 11 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Briefing document by Church in Chains on The Persecution of Christians [Mr. Olusola Iginla, Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of Nigeria]

Transport, Tourism and Sport (Select sub)
CR4, LH 2000 12 noon (T)
AGENDA: Public Transport Bill 2015 [Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport]

European Union Affairs (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 12.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: European Court of Auditors Annual Report 2014 [Mr. Kevin Cardiff, Member of the European Court of Auditors]

Education and Social Protection (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 1 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: The School Meals Programme [Healthy Food for All; Irish Primary Principals’ Network; and Department of Social Protection]

European Scrutiny - Finance and Public Expenditure (Joint sub)
CR4, LH 2000 2 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 11 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Session A: 11.15 a.m.
Review of the Credit Union Sector in Ireland (resumed) [Ms. Anne Marie McKiernan, Registrar of Credit Unions]

Public Service Oversight and Petitions (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 4 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Procedure and Privileges of Dáil Éireann Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 6 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting