



**F**OR the first time in many years, this year's architectural graduates did not have to take the "automatic road to the airport" with all graduates wishing to work in Ireland "snapped up".

That's according to Carole Pollard, President of The Royal **Institute of the Architects** of Ireland (RIAI), who praises the resilience and innovation of architects in making it through the recession. The improving property market has boosted the profession and, while there are "slight concerns", she says, over the possible impacts of Brexit and the US election, one early outcome is an increase in enquiries to the RIAI from UK architects, who want to continue working in Europe, post-Brexit.

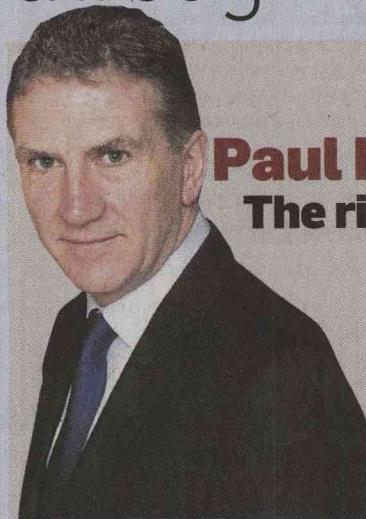
The RIAI's annual two-day conference gets underway on Friday, November 25. With 'Resilience, Relevance and Reach' as its theme, the event is set to cover some interesting topics.

Two examples of resilience within the architectural profession that caught my eye are those of architect Grainne Hassett, who was involved as a volunteer in the design and construction of shelters and community facilities in 'The Jungle' at Calais. She will speak about her experience there, and of her work now with displaced children.

Another example is that of 'The Fab Lab' - a 3D modelling centre using digital fabrication, established in Limerick by architecture graduates. Among their successes is a 3D, scale printed model of Limerick city, which is now on display.

Pollard told me "architects need to shout louder about their

# Resilience, relevance and reach see architects through the recession



**Paul McNeive**  
The right moves

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relevance to the built environment", noting that the quality of our built environment can greatly improve people's lives. She referenced an interesting study by Diana Anderson, a doctor and architect who has established that hospital patients in rooms with windows have better outcomes than those without. This is due to the more natural circadian rhythms but also because staff check on patients with windows more frequently, as they prefer being in those rooms.

Irish architects are reaching out, both in terms of their work abroad, and in searching for new ideas. One possible solution to our housing crisis is to adopt a model of urban development that has already seen over 10,000

Germans moving into timber-framed schemes known as 'co-housing' and 'companionships'.

Berlin architect, Markus Lager, who will address the conference, told me co-housing sees groups of between four and 50 owners coming together with each apartment individually designed for their requirements.

The buildings are typically four or five storeys high with their timber frame or solid timber construction suiting inner-city sites, due to the speed and cleanliness of construction. Lager says when these schemes become available, they are "always over-subscribed". His firm of 25 architects specialises in urban, timber-framed

developments and an interesting point is that each owner is a separate client of the architect.

Companionships are larger schemes where bigger groups come together to develop a building, with any profit arising used for future repairs. The apartments are not individually designed, but there are often up to eight choices of design in each building. These schemes can comprise up to 80 units and Lager is currently working on a seven-storey companionship building in Munich of solid timber construction.

While one wonders if these innovations could help boost housing supply in Ireland, I suspect that high-rise, timber-framed apartments are not permitted under our building regulations.

## PROPERTY AWARDS

IT was an honour to act as MC at the KPMG *Irish Independent* Property Excellence Awards last week. With nearly 900 people in attendance at the ceremony, there is no doubt it has caught the industry's imagination. Feedback from the attendees is that the integrity of the awards judging process underpins its credibility. I expect to see an increase in the number of entries next year and encourage everyone to become involved.