

Forfás

STRATEGY
2008 - 2011



Strategy 2008 - 2011

The global business environment is changing constantly and more rapidly than ever before. This level and pace of change has implications for how organisations and enterprises need to do business.

Responding to this challenge, Forfás has worked closely with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, stakeholders and staff to develop a new Strategy to ensure that our organisation responds positively to the changing needs of enterprise and science in Ireland.

We have engaged in consultation with a wide range of our stakeholders and have sought inputs and analysis from our Board and our staff. We analysed our strengths and weaknesses and reviewed opportunities for our organisation to add further value to the public policy-making system. We have assessed our culture and have identified the characteristics of a culture that would best support the delivery of our Strategy.

Forfás Strategy 2008 - 2011 confirms our commitment to continue delivering well considered advice and builds on our strengths. Forfás has the skills and expertise to look across the wide range of issues relevant to business. We work to bring our analytical skills to bear and to bring forward insight and analysis which informs the development of enterprise and science policies for Ireland. Our Strategy places an increasing emphasis on the the policy areas which are most critical to businesses and our economy. We will make sure that the way in which we do our work supports the implementation of our advice and recommendations. We will engage more closely throughout the deliberative process so that we influence outcomes by getting our messages to the right people, in the right ways and at the right times. We will communicate with our stakeholders in language and in ways that ensure our work is easily accessible and our messages are clear.

We are well positioned to move to the next stage of our organisation's development. Our stakeholders have confirmed that we have valuable strengths in policy development, science awareness and accreditation activities, and our corporate services will be an important resource to assist the organisation in moving towards our goal.

I would like to thank all who participated in and contributed to the development of this Strategy, including our stakeholders who have given generously of their time and our Board members, particularly those on the Strategy Sub-Group. I would also like to thank Forfás staff who are all committed to delivering on this Strategy.

Without doubt this Strategy will challenge us, and it is by working with our stakeholders and further developing our relevant expertise that we will move to the next phase of our organisation's development.

Martin Cronin
Chief Executive

Vision

Forfás will:

- Successfully identify and understand the issues facing enterprise and science;
- Propose policies that address opportunities and challenges; and
- Influence policy-makers to develop an environment that stimulates and supports sustainable economic development and national prosperity.

Mission

To contribute to the future success of Ireland's economy as an agency of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, by providing ambitious, coherent and widely understood enterprise and science policy advice that supports growth.

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Forfás is Ireland's national policy advisory body for enterprise and science.

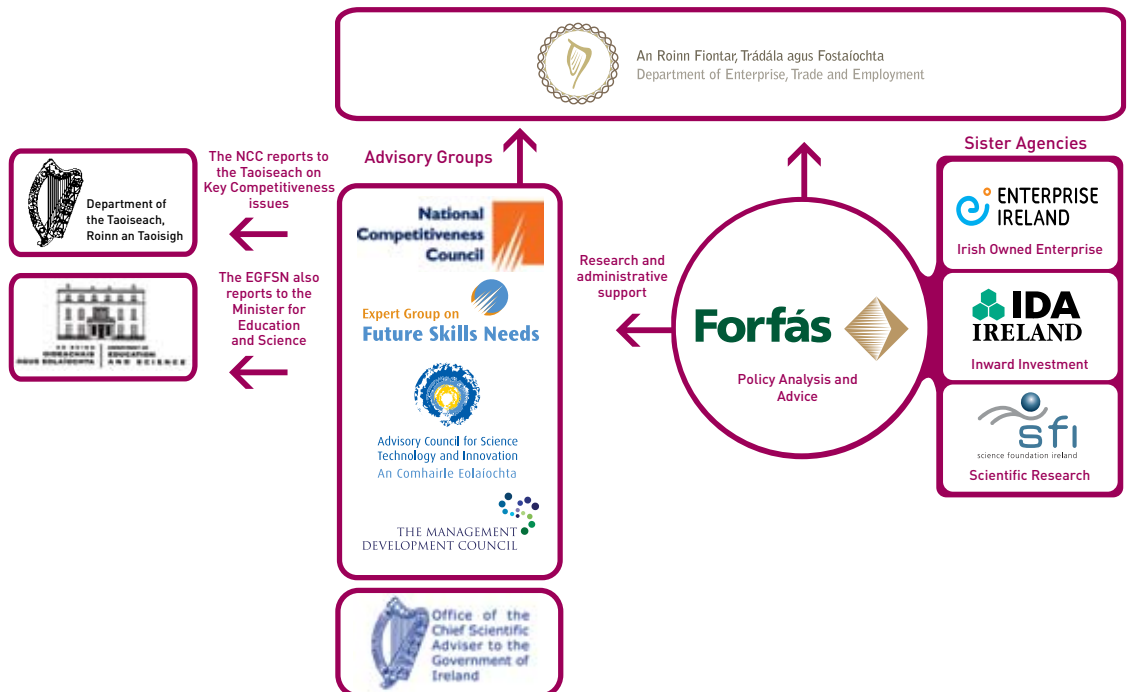
About Forfás

Forfás was established in 1994 as an agency of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, in the context of an economic environment which was substantially different from that in which Ireland's enterprises now operate. Forfás' role, however, remains as relevant in today's competitive and constantly changing global marketplace as it was when it was established.

Forfás' policy functions are to:

- Provide independent and rigorous research, advice and support in the areas of enterprise and science policy. This work informs the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and wider Government in their responses to the fast-changing needs of global business environment;
- Ensure the coherence of policies across the development agencies supporting enterprise;
- Evaluate enterprise policy interventions;
- Provide research and administrative support to independent advisory groups which currently include the:
 - Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (ASC)
 - Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN)
 - Management Development Council (MDC)
 - National Competitiveness Council (NCC)

Forfás, Sister Agencies and Advisory Groups



Additional functions include the:

- Accreditation services of the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB);
- Managing the national awareness programme, Discover Science and Engineering;
- Provision of certain shared corporate services for IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland; and
- Hosting the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government.

Highlights 1994 - 2008

To date Forfás' expertise has been applied in a wide range of areas to inform the policies required to advance Ireland's ongoing economic and enterprise development including:

- The development of an evolving vision for the future of Irish enterprise through a sequence of reports: *Shaping Our Future* (1996) *Enterprise 2010* (2000), *Ahead of the Curve, Ireland's place in the Global Economy* (Enterprise Strategy Group (2004)) and *Small Business is Big Business: Report of the Small Business Forum* (2006) and *Catching the Wave: A Services Strategy for Ireland* (Services Strategy Group (2008)).
- The establishment of Science Foundation Ireland, recognising the importance of scientific research for the long-term competitiveness of Irish enterprise as identified through the Technology Foresight process (1999).
- Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) research and policy advice, most recently analysis and advice to the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Education and Science leading to the €8.3 billion investment provided for STI in the National Development Plan and following on from the Forfás R&D Action Plan, *Building Ireland's Knowledge Economy* (2004) and Forfás' work with the cross-departmental team preparing the Government's Strategy for SSTI (2006).
- The establishment of and support for a new science governance system (including the establishment of the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government and the Advisory Council on Science, Technology and Innovation) to ensure coherence in the State's increased scientific research investment.
- The development of the Discover Science and Engineering programme which promotes awareness of science and engineering.
- Informing Government actions and education and training providers to address labour market development and skills needs for enterprise in Ireland through support to the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and including the development of *Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy* (March 2007).

- Informing Government measures to improve framework conditions for Irish enterprise, particularly infrastructure investment priorities including road and port transport investment, waste management and electricity and gas, specifically as inputs to the National Development Plan and drawing from Forfás' work in support of the National Competitiveness Council in highlighting issues affecting our international competitiveness.
- Changes to the tax system stemming from Forfás' advice on how the tax system could best support enterprise competitiveness.
- Independent analytical support and advice on Ireland's negotiating position in international trade negotiations, most recently for the Doha round on industrial goods and services.
- Ensuring that emissions trading and greenhouse gas negotiations do not impact on Ireland's competitiveness.
- Strengthening the culture of evaluation and constant improvement in agency interventions to support enterprise development, through Forfás programme reviews and evaluations.

Policy Areas

Forfás policy advice addresses five overarching policy areas which are of critical importance to the success of enterprise in Ireland.

Competitiveness	Ensuring Ireland is a good place to live and to do business
Enterprise	Supporting the development of sustainable enterprise
Knowledge	Making research and technology work for business and Ireland
People	Building world leading education and training to sustain and build Ireland's prosperity
Sustainability	Contributing to environmental sustainability and identifying opportunities for enterprise

Forfás Strengths

Forfás has a range of distinctive competencies and strengths on which we will build as we implement this Strategy.

Experience	Our people have extensive experience in the development of evidence-based policy advice.
Expertise	We have expertise across a range of disciplines including economics, science and business. We combine research and analytical capabilities with operational awareness and a pragmatic approach to the delivery of our advice.
Relationships	We work in an inclusive way and apply the power of networks. We have productive relationships with a range of stakeholders, nationally and internationally, in the first instance with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and also with other government departments, our sister agencies, higher education, advisory bodies and businesses. These relationships provide Forfás with an informed view of the drivers of economic success and help in developing and progressing a shared approach to issues and opportunities.
Safe Space	Due to our unique position we can provide a “safe space” for debate on business issues between the full range of government departments, agencies and stakeholders, and assist them in developing joined up approaches to address issues and progress new thinking.
Quality and Professionalism	We aim to produce work of the highest quality. Professionalism and excellence are guiding principles in our interactions with all stakeholders.

This Strategy is a blueprint for Forfás for the next three years and builds on our past achievements.

Forfás Strategy

Strategic Actions

What?

Key Strategic Issues and Opportunities

We will focus more of our time and resources on anticipating and responding to the most important issues facing Irish enterprise and science.

To sharpen the focus on today's most important enterprise related strategic issues and opportunities we will progress five substantial projects over the coming year (outlined on page 17).

The strategic issues will change over time and the focus of our work will be reviewed and renewed on an ongoing basis.

Ongoing Policy Work Programme

We will deliver excellence in policy analysis and advice in response to the needs of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and other stakeholders.

How?

Ways of Working

We will employ a broad range of operating techniques in our work. In addition to undertaking detailed, high quality analysis and providing recommendations as required we will:

- Work with stakeholders to frame issues to be addressed;
- Develop policy options in close consultation with stakeholders; and
- Support implementation of policy change.

Why?

Achieving Outcomes

We will support the achievement of desired outcomes by getting our messages to the right people in the right way and at the right time. In addition to the rigorous, detailed reports required by policymakers we will employ a range of other methods to communicate effectively with important influencers of policy.

Operating Principles

The defining features of Forfás' policy research and advice will be:

Forward Thinking

Through systematic scanning of the horizon we will identify the needs of enterprise and the science system. We will constantly monitor the issues impacting on enterprise and science policy development and requirements and will work to ensure that we are in a position to proactively address opportunities or issues. Our policy advice will be informed by our knowledge of developments in other countries.

Enterprise Lens

Forfás will keep the enterprise perspective at the core of its research and policy advice and will focus on aspects of the business environment that directly or indirectly impact on the competitiveness of companies operating from Ireland and on Ireland's attractiveness for investment.

Focus

We will dedicate more of our resources to the *most* important factors for enterprise and science development in Ireland. We will leverage the breadth and depth of skills and expertise within our organisation to deliver comprehensive responses to those areas.

Informed Policy Analysis

We will ensure that our robust and rigorous analysis and advice is strongly grounded in evidence and underpinned by excellence.

Anticipatory and Responsive

We will anticipate changing stakeholder needs. We are flexible and will quickly re-prioritise our resources to meet the demands of a constantly changing economic environment.

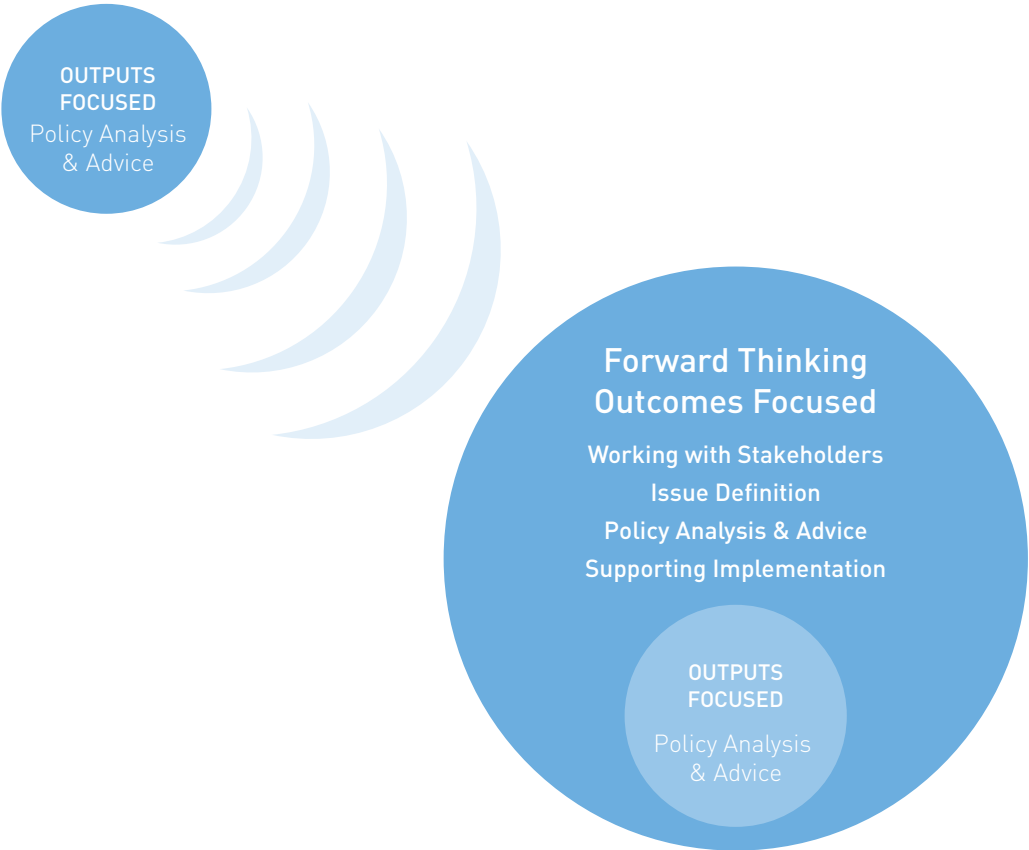
Influencing Outcomes

We will support the process of implementation of our advice so that we help to effect change and achieve desired outcomes.

Changing Emphasis

The diagram below shows the proposed evolution of our approach to policy research and advice. This will require openness to new ideas and will depend on our ability to influence change.

Making a Difference for Enterprise And Science



Underpinned By Changes In Our Culture

Culture

The culture of an organisation can support its strategy or work against it.

Throughout the Strategy review process we put significant effort into analysing and understanding of the culture needed to support the successful implementation of the Strategy.

The change in emphasis in our approach to policy research and advice will be underpinned by an open, inclusive and progressive culture.

Our People	Our people are core to the success of Forfás and we will place a high priority on their development.
A Learning Organisation	We will constantly ask "how can we do this better?"
Knowledge Sharing	We will think about how others can benefit from what we know. We will proactively share that knowledge
Measuring Success	Our stakeholders know when we have succeeded. We will seek their feedback to enable us to review and refine our approach.
Recognising Success	We will acknowledge our achievements and recognise outcomes to which we have contributed.

Forfás CORE Values

Forfás is guided by its CORE values in all of its activities and interactions.

Client Focus

Our clients are our priority. We build strong relationships through excellence in performance and delivery. We:

- Are proactive, flexible and positive in responding to the needs of our clients;
- Demonstrate our commitment to delivery and excellence; and
- Exercise discretion and confidentiality.

Openness

The quality of our work depends on the quality of our relationships. We actively engage with a wide range of people and institutions, both national and international, to ensure that we have the best knowledge, experience and expertise available to us. We:

- Use the power of networking and team work, both within the organisation and in our engagement with others;
- Work with each other and collaborate without functional boundaries;
- Seek out new learning and practical experience;
- Actively share our knowledge; and
- Listen to other stakeholders and are open to new ideas.

Respect and Integrity

We invest heavily in our people, who are our most important asset. We conduct business to the highest professional standards, developing trust in each other and with our clients. We:

- Value and acknowledge the contribution and initiative of Forfás staff and others;
- Understand that we all benefit from diversity and creativity;
- Are accountable for all our actions; and
- Stand up for what we believe.

Excellence

Excellence is the foundation of everything we do. We strive to achieve highest standards of performance and quality. We do not stand still. We seek to continuously improve ourselves, our processes and our outputs. We:

- Demand excellence and quality across the organisation;
- Take personal responsibility for producing high quality outputs;
- Strive for continuous improvement;
- Invest in continuous learning; and
- Actively address issues of performance.

Forfás is committed to focusing more of its resources on the issues that are of *greatest* importance to enterprise and science in Ireland.

Making it Happen

- To sharpen the focus on today's enterprise related key strategic issues and opportunities we will progress five substantial projects, starting in 2008.
- These projects will be resourced with the necessary depth and range of expertise and experience required to deliver on them, drawing on people from across the organisation. This approach will better leverage the organisation's creative capacity to provide innovative and pragmatic policy options.
- The projects will be driven at the highest levels of the organisation led by senior management and involving regular Board engagement.
- Many other items on the work programme will contribute to answering the research questions in the Strategic Projects.

In the changing economic climate this approach will enable us to optimise the use of limited resources.

Key Strategic Issues and Opportunities

Starting in 2008, the five areas of greatest importance to enterprise and science development to which Forfás can add the most value are:

Policy Area	Key Strategic Issues and Opportunities	The Core Research Question
Knowledge	Assessment of the Science and Technology Ecosystem	How should emerging research strengths evolve to maximise the development of high value added enterprise and of a high productivity economy?
People	Achieving OECD top-decile education and training outcomes	Building on our current education and training systems, how can we ensure that they will be a major source of future competitive advantage by achieving "top decile in OECD" outputs?
Enterprise	Future Enterprise Needs	Considering the likely shape of the future enterprise base ten years from now, are the current enterprise strategies relevant and complementary?
Competitiveness	Achieving Competitive Regions	What needs to be done to ensure Ireland continues to build competitive regions?
Sustainability	Environmental / Energy - Opportunities and Challenges	How can we realise the opportunities and address the challenges for enterprise which will be presented by environmental and energy related issues?

Ongoing Policy Work Programme

In addition to the Key Strategic Issues, Forfás is committed to the effective management and delivery of a wider work programme in response to the needs of our stakeholders.

This will include research and secretariat support to advisory groups including the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, the Management Development Council, the National Competitiveness Council and also other policy work which may be required.

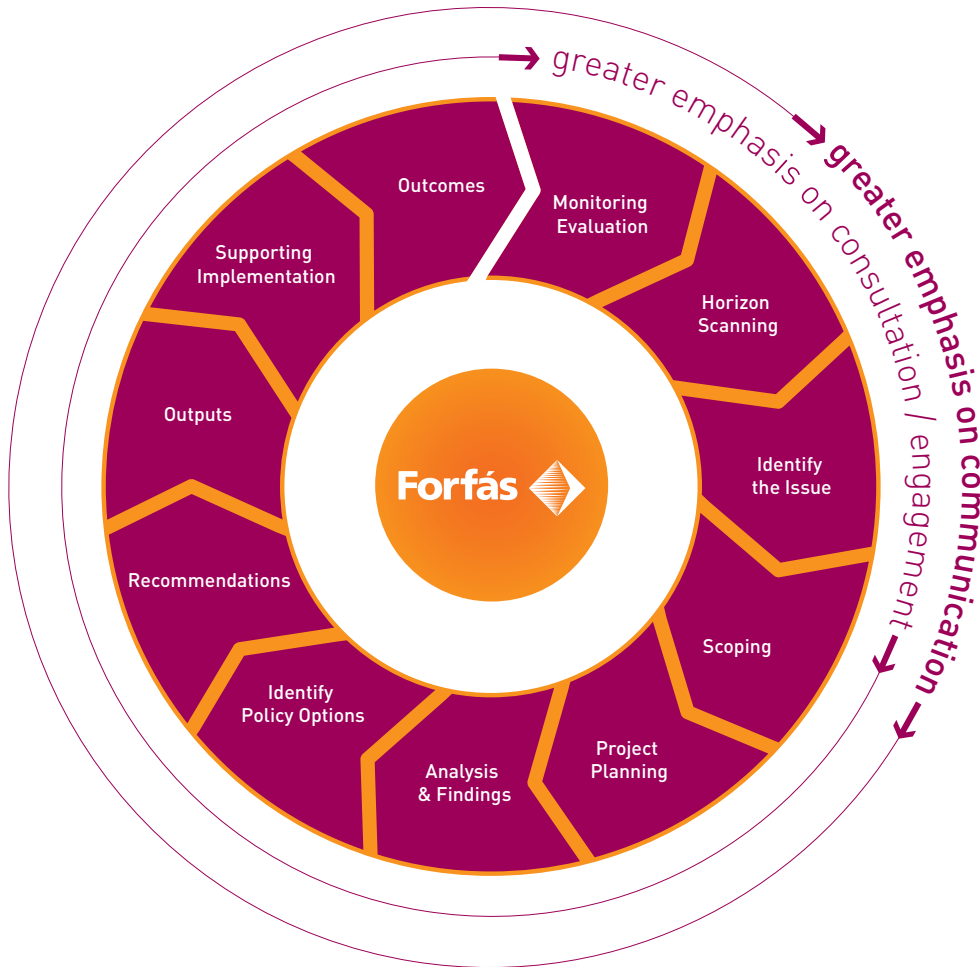
Other work items that will deepen our understanding of the Key Strategic Issues will include our surveys, analysing key enterprise and research indicators and our work in evaluation of enterprise programmes.

We will respond to the changing needs of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and other relevant stakeholders in a professional and comprehensive manner.

Ways of Working

A Lifecycle Approach to Policy Issues

Each policy issue has a lifecycle. We will define the measures required throughout the lifecycle of the policy issue to achieve the defined outcome and identify a series of deliverables. We will consider a variety of working methods, and apply the most appropriate for the issue in question. As part of this approach, at the beginning of any activity, we will set out an effective programme of engagement with stakeholders with a view to influencing and promoting outcomes.



In our lifecycle planning we will consider how we can best achieve the desired results, who we need to engage with, in what way and at what stages throughout the project process. There are a variety of working methods which we will consider including:

- Helping to frame the question
- Developing consensus on the problem, the objectives, the policy requirements
- Setting out the overall objectives and the steps needed to address them
- Assisting various parties to work together in search of solutions
- Creating safe spaces, conducive to information sharing and the joint search for best advice / solutions to stakeholders
- Assessing policy options and alternatives
- Building shared understanding and alliances for action
- Developing recommendations and informing solutions

Forfás Board

The Forfás Board comprises members from diverse backgrounds across the private sector, the development agencies and the civil service. The Board will assign more time for the discussion of the Key Strategic Issues throughout the lifecycle of each projects to bring the expertise and experience of the Board to the planning and execution of these important projects..

Learning from Experience

We have identified a number of projects that demonstrate ways in which Forfás has been successful in the past. More emphasis will be placed at the initial scoping stage of each new project to assess which approach is most likely to achieve to be successful.

Achieving Outcomes

Communication with external and internal stakeholders and influencers is the responsibility of team members throughout a project lifecycle. Good communication is essential to reach the most appropriate actors so that we can optimise the impact of our work.

We will devote time to understand our stakeholders' requirements and will deliver our messages to them in the most effective way.

Developing mechanisms for effective communication with our stakeholders will be a priority for each project we undertake. It will be built in at early stage planning and throughout the project lifecycle and we will draw from the experience and expertise of our Communications Department in the process.

Appendix

Forfás Board Members

Mr Eoin O’Driscoll (Chairman)

Managing Director, Aderra

Mr Pat Barry

Communications Adviser

Mr Martin Cronin

Chief Executive, Forfás

Prof. Frank Gannon

Director General, Science Foundation Ireland

Mr Sean Gorman

Secretary General, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Ms Anne Heraty

Chief Executive, Computer Placement Resources (cpl) plc

Dr Rosheen McGuckian

Group Corporate Development Director, National Toll Roads

Mr Rody Molloy

Director General, FÁS

Mr William O’Brien

Managing Director, William O’Brien Plant Hire Ltd.

Mr Barry O’Leary

Chief Executive, IDA Ireland

Mr Frank Ryan

Chief Executive Officer, Enterprise Ireland

Dr Don Thornhill

Chairman, National Competitiveness Council

Ms Jane Williams

Managing Director, The Sia Group

Mr Michael O’Leary

Secretary to the Board, Forfás



The publications of Forfás and the advisory groups to which it provides administrative and secretariat support are available at: www.forfas.ie

To sign up for our email alerts contact us at info@forfas.ie or through the website.

September 2008

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