



Confidential Client Data Centre

Kirby Group Competing Abroad

Founded in 1964 as an electrical engineering contracting business, Kirby has grown to become an M&E engineering contractor and now operates in Ireland, the UK and Northern European markets offering high-value engineering and construction services. Irish building magazine spoke to Jimmy Kirby about the Company, its interests and successes.



Jimmy Kirby

“As with all matters business, maintaining competitive advantage with our chosen customers is the constant challenge.”

Jimmy Kirby was appointed Group Managing Director of Kirby Group in January 2017. Jimmy joined the Company in 1991 as a Project Manager and has held the roles of Business Unit Manager, Projects Director, Strategy and Innovation Director and Executive Chairman within the Company. He has postgraduate degrees in Sales Management and Business Studies.

Describing the Company and its scale, Jimmy said “We are a Mechanical and Electrical engineering contracting Company and we presently employ 670 people directly. In 2016, we had a turnover of €167m; we expect a turnover in excess of €170m in 2017.” Kirby operates in the chosen sectors of: “Pharma, utility and renewables, industrial manufacturing, petrochemical, data centres, and commercial. These sectors are the sectors on which we focus our capabilities.”

Kirby's Project Portfolio and Competitiveness

Kirby has completed a significant number of large projects in Ireland, the UK and in Northern Europe over the past decade. Jimmy told us about Kirby's portfolio of projects across the sectors. We asked him to tell us about the key milestone projects recently completed, those ongoing, and those in the pipeline: “Currently we are in the process of delivering Kilgallioch 250MW WF, South

Ayrshire; Alexion, Dublin; Alexion, Athlone; Mallinkrodt, Dublin; Cytec, Manchester; GSK, Worthing; Confidential Data Centre, London; Interxion Data Centre, Dublin; Gemini Data Centre, Dublin; and Adare Manor Hotel, Limerick. Recently, we successfully delivered Meenadreen 95MW WF, Donegal on a civil and electrical BoP design and build basis; GSK, Irvine; Regeneron, Limerick; Telety Data Centre, Dublin; ACI Data Centre, Limerick; and Neste Oil, Porvoo.”

Jimmy told us that the Company is performing very well and told us about the changes to the Company structure in the past year. “There were changes in the senior management team. I transferred from the role of Chairman to Managing Director. Fergus Frawley transferred from the role of Managing Director to that of Chairman. Conor O'Brien was appointed Commercial Director. Sean Rapple was appointed the Group Head of Pre-Construction, and an Associate Director.”

He told us about the markets that Kirby are competing in. “Ireland and the UK are well established, and we are building our capabilities in mainland Europe. We are also looking at specific project opportunities outside of Europe.” Speaking about the challenges in the industry, Jimmy said, “As with all matters business, maintaining competitive advantage with our chosen customers is the constant challenge.”



Meenadreen WF

In Kirby's experience, tendering is in a highly competitive state in the Irish, UK and European construction industries and Jimmy is aware of this competitive environment but focuses on what Kirby has to offer. “In the countries and sectors we operate in, a key component of our value proposition is that we offer a competitive price.”

The current labour shortage is a major concern for the Irish Construction Industry, however, this is not a current challenge for Kirby as we know from our interview with Kirby's Head of Human Resources and Associate Director, Fergus Barry for Issue 4 last year the Company was proactive in planning ahead. Regarding the labour and skills shortage, Jimmy said, “We are not experiencing a significant shortage. The reason is we have our own direct labour force and we have a well-established supply chain. It is not an issue for us at the present.”

Research and Innovations

Research roles are opening in contracting companies. Kirby recently posted a vacancy for a Business Analyst which has now been filled. We asked Jimmy about such roles within Kirby and if in-house research is important at the Company. “We have researchers in the business. The researchers carry out the role of business analysts within the strategy function. We look for people with well-developed research and analytical skills, degrees in business subjects aid in developing the skills required for these research roles.”

Kirby regularly attend and present at CitA and Lean Construction Ireland (LCI) events. The Company has strong capabilities in BIM and prefabrication, in particular, mechanical services prefabrication. Jimmy discussed the Company's application of technology to construction and the efficiencies it has delivered. “The role of BIM Services Coordinator is a well-established role within the Company. Progress in BIM capabilities has been steadily made since starting to create this capability in 2012. This capability and the off-site fabrication capability is a really good fit for projects where the customer understands and wants to realise the benefits available through

successful application across the project lifecycle of design, construction and O&M. On suitable projects such as data centres where we deliver the M&E installation, we have achieved a 9% saving on the overall project man-hours through BIM enabled detailed coordination and off-site fabrication.

“Learn the principles of strategy, leadership and teamwork and apply these throughout your career and continually apply the lessons learnt from their application.”

Kirby are increasingly involved in the successful implementation of a form of contract based on Integrated Project Delivery (IPD). This type of contract which is collaborative in nature with a focus on the best interests of the project is becoming more common in certain sectors. “On a recent Irish project, through working with the customer and design team at detailed design stage, we collectively managed to save 17% on the cost of our scope which was very much appreciated by all concerned.”

“Our overall approach to Lean is about reducing cycle times of all our business activities which drives efficiency and eliminating rework.” We make continuous progress on cycle time reduction and each success is communicated throughout the



Biopharma

organisation. Our company-wide innovation suggestion system works very well in the context of cycle time reduction. Kirby staff members have attended all of LCI events since the organisation's beginning, Jimmy said, “We have attended all the events to date. These events allow us to determine how we are performing against local and international standards as well as being a useful source of relevant information on Lean theory and practice.” All of the people on our graduate programme are given Lean training and there are also people within our organisation with postgraduate degrees in Lean application to the construction industry.

Corporate Culture and International Challenges

Jimmy spoke of Kirby's corporate culture and project execution. “Our values are safety, quality, delivery, and value in the context of creating and sharing value. We look to employ people who we feel will align with these values, and this helps to create and maintain our strong and effective company culture, which we call the ‘Kirby Way.’” Kirby has won many awards for outstanding performances in safety in recent times including two awards at the 25th Annual National Irish Safety Organisation/Northern Ireland Safety Group Safety Awards 2016. The Company has also won quality awards on a consistent basis for the last ten years.

2016 was a year of unexpected events for the business world, and this has also influenced Irish construction leaders. Jimmy said, “The emerging environmental risks of Brexit, the reduction in investment in wind farms in the UK and Ireland and the US Presidential election were significant in 2016, and we are dealing with these risks through our Company strategy formulation and implementation.” We asked what the future holds for Kirby. “The Company has excellent future prospects due to the strengths of our management team, our staff, our capabilities, our strategy and our customer value proposition.”

Concluding our questions, we asked Jimmy if he had any hard-won lessons that he would like to pass on to other members of the Irish Construction Industry, perhaps someone 20 years younger starting off in construction. His advice was “Learn the principles of strategy, leadership and teamwork and apply these throughout your career and continually apply the lessons learnt from their application.” ■