



Investors in Klondyke hoping to strike it rich

BY LAURENCE WHITE

FARMERS are putting down roots in the city – having acquired three properties worth nearly £20m in Belfast in the last six months.

The latest deal was the purchase of the landmark Klondyke Building on the city's Ormeau Road, which was bought for £11.7m.

Constructed in 1891, the refurbished building has been let to the Department of Finance and Personnel on a 15-year lease and is the new headquarters for the Environment & Heritage Service.

The property was bought by Irish off-farm investment specialist Farrelly and Mitchell on behalf of Elm Private III, which comprises of a number of investors, primarily Irish farmers.

Ulster property consultancy Osborne King acted on behalf of Republic-based Farrelly and Mitchell, which previously snapped up an office development at Adelaide Street in the city centre for £4.6m and offices at the junction of Oxford Street and Ann Street for £3.1m.

Mark Dolan, senior property consultant (acquisition) with Farrelly and Mitchell, said the company's strategic aim is to invest around £50m in the Northern Ireland property market by the middle of next year.

Mark Carron of Osborne King said: "In recent years we've experienced an increasing amount of interest from Republic of Ireland investors.

"After years of limited movement, we believe Belfast is experiencing a significant period of office rental growth. In fact we predict rents will break through the £15 sqft barrier by early 2008, which still represents great value for investors compared with other cities in the UK or Dublin."

Farrelly and Mitchell has acquired a number of properties throughout Germany valued in excess of €60m on behalf of private and corporate clients.

It also manages a major development and property portfolio in north Florida in the US valued at over €150m.

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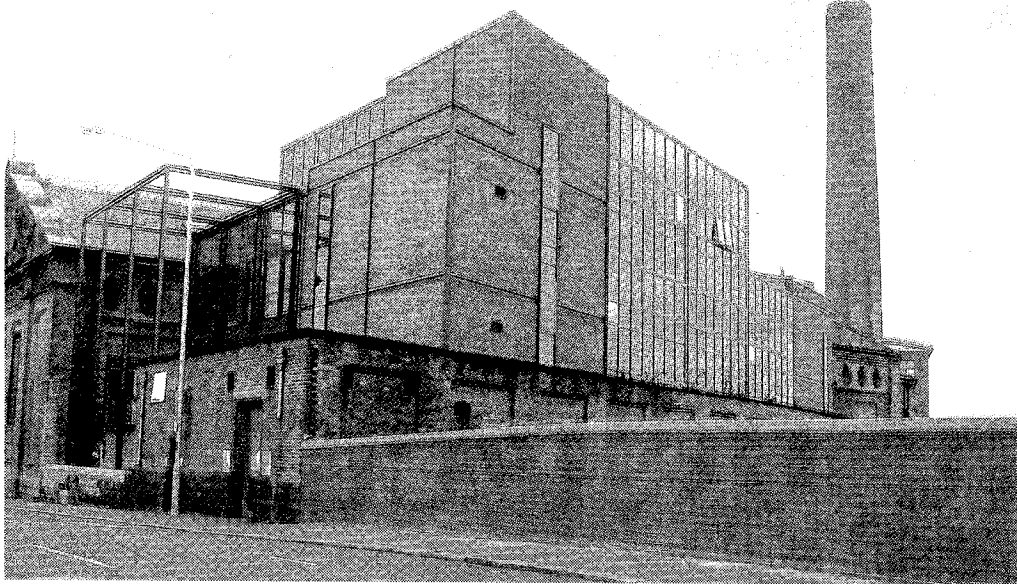
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