

23<sup>rd</sup>. December, 2003.

Mr. Reuben Irvine,  
Economist,  
Advocacy Division,  
Competition Authority,  
Parnell House,  
14 Parnell Square,  
Dublin 1.

**Re: Protection of the Title 'Architect'.**

Dear Sir,

Further to the above, I enclose my own short commentary for your information.

Yours faithfully,

  
DAMIEN DILLON

Encl.

c.c. Martin Cullen, T.D. Minister for the Environment and Local Government.  
Ollie Wilkinson, T.D.  
Councillor Pat Daly.



**Damien Dillon + Company** Architects + Interior Designers 18 Mitchell St., Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

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## Justification for Protection of the title ARCHITECT

By Damien Dillon

At the most fundamental level one does not expect to employ somebody less skilled than a term or title may imply; for example, if I am looking for a joiner I do not expect to get a carpenter and if I am looking for a carpenter I do not expect a handyman, with no skill or expertise in the area. So by the same token when someone is looking for an Architect they should be in a position to get an Architect, not a Technician or an Engineer or a Surveyor.

Limiting the title 'Architect' should not diminish or reduce either competitiveness nor the roles of Engineers, Surveyors or Technicians, but it would highlight the fact that these different proponents deliver different, but maybe allied services.

Dungarvan, where I practice as an Architect, may not be an exact microcosm of the design world, but maybe this 'thumbnail sketch' might throw some light on the subject. In outline there are a number of 'practices' around the area as follows: -

1. Damien Dillon & Company, Architects - 8 people employed.
2. [redacted] ) 3 - 4 people employed.
3. [redacted] - 3 people employed.
4. [redacted] - 4 - 5 people employed.
5. [redacted] retired Local Authority Engineer - 1 person.
6. [redacted], retired Local Authority Engineer - 1 person.
7. [redacted] Technician, 1 person.
8. [redacted], Technician, 1 person.
9. [redacted] Technician, 1 person.

The recent major projects in the town were or are being produced outside as follows: -

- Glanbia site €30m development Fewer McGinley, Architects.
- 120 Local Authority Houses NBA Dublin, Architects.
- Presentation Convent, C & J Falconer, Architects
- 300 Local Authority Houses, NBA Dublin Architects.

The population of Dungarvan is seven thousand approximately, so by any standard there is sufficient competition in this area.

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If you wish to consider whether competition is fair one might consider the following: There are two recently retired Local Authority Engineers who have no office, staff or any discernable overheads and who can 'cherry pick' projects from the safety of the protection of state pensions.

The three technicians (and there maybe more) also operate from home and garner quite a sizeable segment of the market, and again, all operate from Home with all the savings and financial benefits that apply.

My own architectural practice is broad ranging with work in; housing, both public and private, apartments and one off houses; commercial, shops, pubs and restaurants; community centres and crèches; hotels and golf pavilions, etc.

In practice we would not be able to cope with financial competition from any of the competitors, but we score with good design, delivery and service and sheer professionalism in our approach. In the last month alone we have been appointed to projects by two local developers who were disappointed with the performance elsewhere and they even stated that they were willing to pay our fee, which was higher, but worth it for the value of the service.

The foregoing is only a short snippet of anecdotal confirmation that competition is not just about money or price, but has got to do with quality of services. With all due respect I do not know how the Competition Authority could be in a position to resolve these contradictory and conflicting criteria and indicate what might be the balance of fairness.

Finally, while we are upbeat about our performance in the face of a lot of competition for the work in the locality, our salaries / wages probably do not match those of our competitors and they certainly are below equivalent grades in the Local Authority. None of this argues the fundamental case for projection of the title ARCHITECT, but it does indicate, I hope, that there is scope outside of that protection, for others with different titles, to carry out drawings for the building industry.