



# Business leaders support advice service for small firms

by Joe Dermody

SMALL businesses were offered a lifeline last night when a group of business experts gathered to support an advisory service for the Cork area. Bord Gáis CEO, John Mullins, and business author, Eddie Hobbs, joined with representatives from Plato Cork, Cork Chamber of Commerce, and the Cork Business Association to help promote the new [Smallbusinessadvice.ie](http://Smallbusinessadvice.ie) service.

The bid to help businesses ride out the recession has cross-party support. Initiated by FG TD, Simon Coveney, and launched by FF Junior Minister, Billy Kelleher, a team of 35 advisors will offer confidential advice on surviving the recession. The programme is being rolled out in Cork city and county with plans to expand it to other regions throughout 2010. Deputy Coveney said: "The consistent message you get from small business owners is that they are looking for quick, confidential help on specific problems. The experts we have brought together here, are giving their time voluntarily and will be matched to businesses seeking assistance in tackling the difficult challenges they face."

The programme is not a political venture. The programme will run for 12 months. It is sponsored by Bord Gáis Éireann and Plato Cork, which is training business advisors. Billy Kelleher, TD, Minister of State for Trade and Commerce said: "This is all about the Irish business community helping themselves by creating a knowledge pool that can give small business the backing, help, and expertise to deal with the problems they face." Bord Gáis Éireann CEO, John Mullins said: "Bord Gáis is keenly aware of the difficulties facing small businesses in the current economic climate, many of whom are our gas and electricity customers." Eddie Hobbs said: "Practical, on-the-ground help is hard to come by if you are a small business trying to keep your head above water. There are a growing number of businesses on a knife edge and all help... is welcome."

Log onto the [Smallbusinessadvice.ie](http://Smallbusinessadvice.ie) website, or call (021) 4534163.