



Ireland

Cost of rebuilding wall outside Workplace Relations Commission doubled to €490,000

Office of Public Works project became more expensive after live electricity cable and leaking pipe were discovered

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The OPW acknowledged there were 'very significant delays as well as increased costs' on a job at Lansdowne House in Dublin. Photograph: Colin Keegan/Collins

Ken Foxe

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An [Office of Public Works \(OPW\)](#) project to replace an unsafe 70m perimeter wall around a [Workplace Relations Commission](#) office in Dublin ended up costing more than €490,000. The works at the commission's Ballsbridge headquarters were originally expected to cost around €200,000 excluding VAT. However, records show a live electricity cable and a leaking

pipe were discovered during preliminary works. The extra works to deal with the cable uncovered ended up adding some €250,000 to the bill.

The OPW acknowledged there were “very significant delays as well as increased costs” on the job at Lansdowne House. Among these were payments of €54,000 to the ESB to redirect the wire and €61,500 to [Dublin City Council](#) in order to close off footpaths and public parking.

A further €82,200 was spent on ancillary costs, according to a detailed breakdown of spending provided by the OPW under the Freedom of Information Act.

A March 2021 OPW inspection of the building found the perimeter wall was “unsafe for health and safety reasons” as it had been built without a proper foundation, leaving it at risk of collapsing. A decision was made to rebuild it using salvaged bricks, and building firm Sensori approved as the contractor. A preliminary estimate of €213,366, including VAT, was provided.

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However, the project ran into difficulties in October 2022 when the leaking main and live cable were discovered. The ESB removed the cable in mid-2023 and work on the wall resumed that December, but early last year the contractor discovered another section of live electrical cable nearby. It contacted the ESB, which said this was not part of the original work and would require a new application for removal or rerouting. The OPW's builders then decided it would be quicker to hire a specialist contractor to do the job.

Last August it emerged that the reconfiguration and rebuilding of the wall had left a shortfall of around 750 blocks of the type needed. In an information note the OPW said a decision was made to retain the existing blocks to “rebuild the wall in accordance with the original design” because the site was in an architectural conservation area.

The OPW said the total costs involved in the wall removal and reconstruction were in line with the original estimate. “The total additional cost due the discovery of the live wire cable was €211,300 ex VAT,” it said in an information note.

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