

# Cartels blamed for high cement prices

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**Cement firms are operating cross-boarder cartels and keeping prices unnaturally high, Dr Ulrich Classen of Belgian firm Cartel Damage Claims (CDC) told C/ at Hillhead.**

Dr Classen said the company is preparing to launch a legal case against manufacturers, after a German cartel was broken up in 2001/02. CDC is also talking to a manufacturer and cement importer that was put out of business by what the ex-owner claimed to be cartel activity in the Republic of Ireland.

CDC is claiming £89.5m from ex-cartel members for high prices paid during the cartel period. The

firm is representing approximately 30 German cement buyers and has 300,000 invoices from the period.

Dr Classen said cement prices stayed high after the EC broke up a readymix cartel in the 1990s. It was not until the cement cartel was uncovered that prices fell by approximately one-third.

Irish manufacturer Seamus Maye is talking to CDC after campaigning for nearly 10 years against what he claims is anti-competitive behaviour. Maye headed cement importer Amantiss, and concrete firms Framus and Wilbury. He is considering taking his claim from the Irish courts to the European Commission.

Maye's complaints include integrated companies undercutting smaller firms on cement prices. He also criticised a cement certification scheme, which he claimed hit manufacturers that used imported cement. He is claiming £166m in damages for the effects on his three companies.

Maye also questioned the relatively small quantities of cement imported into the UK and Ireland, despite overcapacity in countries such as Germany.

Maye told *CJ*: "It's time for the small business to fight back. The small businesses are the bulk of consumers - if they are protected, it will affect the whole of the supply chain."