

Joining up the Docks

Connecting Docklands Business to local communities and organisations to create sustainable economic growth

Alan Robinson

Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to outline the role the Docklands Business Forum (Forum) has developed for itself within the Docklands while also highlighting its potential for growth; The Forum is not just a business networking or representative body but has a wider role and grander ambition.

The demise of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) has created a resource vacuum that the Forum has in some respects filled, principally in the areas of promoting the Docklands and supporting enterprise. The Forum has built a unique network of commercial and non commercial organisations and is working with them to further our vision for the Docklands.

The success the Forum has to date, in creating and growing a vibrant business community, assures us of the need for the leadership we provide. The significant opportunities for creating employment, from support services to large corporations and tourism are just a few of the areas where the forum can play a lead role:

- The large corporations in the Docklands spend tens of millions each year on products and services from outside the area, even abroad. The Forum is connecting the large with the small and will create jobs for local businesses, making the whole city more competitive and making a positive contributing to the environment as a result of companies using more local service providers;
- The newly refurbished Liffey Quays and Grand Canal Basin are an untapped recreation and tourist destination. In the first half of 2013 alone the Forum has attracted 120,000 visitors into the area. Both the Quays and Basin have the capability to become world destinations' for boating and water sporting with enormous potential for jobs for the city. With the right resources the Forum will make this happen.

The Forum is a largely voluntary organisation. We have an ambitious set of priorities for the future:

1. Connect large with small enterprises to create jobs and businesses through increased local service provision.
2. Develop Festivals promoting Docklands and all the remarkable resources it has to offer.
3. Work with our unique network of businesses, local societies, clubs and organisations to build the Docklands into an all year round international sporting and boating tourist destination creating new enterprises and employment.
4. Be ambassadors for the Docklands as the ideal location for businesses.
5. Promote, grow and celebrate the enterprise culture in the Docklands.
6. Transform the Dublin Docklands website into a one-stop resource for coming to, and locating in, the Docklands.
7. Promote corporate responsibility through initiatives that engage the local workforce with the area.
8. Champion the Docklands maritime and commercial heritage (such as the Graving Docks and Camden Lock on the Grand Canal Basin) and work, through our partners and beyond, to get them restored and reused for the 21st century.

The Docklands

Docklands is a business brand. From its very inception, the raison d'être of the regenerated Docklands was to create wealth. All its principle successes are directly related to enterprise.

Dublin's Docklands is one of the most exciting places to work in the country. The area is a micro economy of over 600 enterprises with new companies moving in every month. The recent regeneration has transformed the Docklands into an innovative built environment and a unique area in which to do business. Employment in the Docklands area stands at over 40,000 with an excess of 25,000 employed in the IFSC area alone¹. This significant level of employment in high end jobs represents an exciting platform for future employment for the city if leveraged effectively.

New infrastructure, such as the Samuel Beckett Bridge and the LUAS Docklands extension, has made the area more accessible than ever before. New venues, including the Bord Gais Energy Theatre and the Convention Centre Dublin, are bringing thousands of visitors to the area every day, breathing vibrancy into the docklands economy. In tandem with the presence of national and international leaders in the finance, legal, digital and communications sectors, the Docklands has become a vibrant working and living district in the city of Dublin.

The Docklands Business Forum

The Docklands Business Forum² (DBF) is the business association for the Dublin Docklands and is recognised as the primary business organisation by the Dublin Docklands Area Master Plan 2008³. With a membership representing over 35,000 employees, including many of the key national and international players in the finance, legal, digital and communications sectors, the DBF is a key stakeholder in the Docklands' area.

The aims and objectives of the DBF are:

- I. To be the representative voice of business in the Docklands area;
- II. To be a networking facility for businesses in the docklands area;
- III. To initiate joint marketing programmes promoting our member's products and services to the Docklands community and beyond;
- IV. To promote the Docklands as a great place to visit and enjoy as an end destination;
- V. To encourage local businesses continued involvement with the local community and environment;
- VI. To promote and encourage the development of an enterprise culture within the Docklands;
- VII. To connect Docklands Business with the wider Dublin Area.

The DBF believe that these objectives are mutually compatible as exemplified by our regular networking meeting which foster a sense of engagement between the Docklands workforce and the

¹ North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Draft Planning Scheme 2013

² www.docklandsbusinessforum.ie

³ DDDA Master Plan 2013 Policy ED13 Page 69

area, our annual Docklands Volunteer Clean Up⁴ which encourages a sense a pride in the local area and our annual Docklands Business Awards⁵ which promotes and celebrates the areas enterprising culture.

It is widely acknowledged by key stakeholders in the area that the DBF, through its many and varied initiatives, has given important leadership to the wide spectrum of Dockland business.

The Forum has, over recent years, built a unique network of local commercial organisations, and made a point of engaging and working with many semi states, non-profits, clubs, associations and enthusiasts of all persuasions to further our ambitious goals. We are now leveraging these relationships to create real progress towards our aims and objectives.

Docklands Business Forum Initiatives

Since the winding down of the DDDA the Forum has provided core services to local businesses particularly in the areas of enterprise, CSR and promoting the Docklands. Up to this point the members of the Forum have managed to do this on a voluntarily basis.

Festivals – Promoting the Docklands as a place to Visit & Enjoy

One of the stated strategic goals of the DDDA through its Dublin Docklands Area Master Plan 2008 is to promote and develop tourism in the Docklands⁶.

This year the Docklands Business Forum attracted almost 120,000 people into the Docklands during our two Festivals, the Waterways Ireland Docklands Summer Festival and the Dublin Port River Fest.

The third Docklands Summer Festival saw 80,000 people attending the event over the two days of May 18th & 19th. The focus is water sport demonstrations and tryout sessions on the remarkable urban resource of the Grand Canal Dock. We also organise markets, funfair attractions, face painters, balloon artists and street performances. The event's title sponsor is Waterways Ireland but we have a wide network of other sponsors and supporters that make the event possible including the Maldron Hotel, the Gibson Hotel, Dublin City Council, Surf Dock, the Marker Hotel, 98FM, Metro Herald, DART, the Coast Guard, Jury's Inn Custom House Quay, the Irish Underwater Search and Retrieval Unit, the Irish Boat Rental Association and the Irish Inland Waterways Association.

A Docklands Business Forum and Dublin Port Company initiative the first Dublin Port River Festival was held on the June Bank Holiday weekend this year and like the Docklands Summer Festival was organised by the Forum. The first event was a great success with over 38,000 people attending.

A significant factor in this events success was the Forum reaching out to our network of local businesses and organisations to get them involved. The Poolbeg Yacht Club, Dublin City Council, the Old Gaffers Association, the Cill Airne Boat Restaurant, Luas, 98FM, the MetroHerald, St John's Ambulance, Sea Safari, the Gibson Hotel, Jury's Inn Custom House Quay and the Coast Guard all

⁴<http://docklandsbusinessforum.ie/docklands-cleanup/>

⁵ <http://docklandsbusinessforum.ie/business-award/>

⁶ Strategic Goals, Section 7, Page 198

contributed to and or assisted in the event. Local businesses provided stewards and volunteers for the event.

Networking – Connecting Businesses

We organise a number of key annual networking events for Dockland companies to meet and get to know how they can assist each other. The most obvious way commercial organisations can aid each other is to provide direct or indirect custom. Acknowledging that this is not always possible, particularly in the current economic climate, we have found other ways to keep networking relevant and useful to our member organisations.

For example, when O2 Telefonica and Zergo developed their Deals App, a Mobile Coupons application, they chose the Docklands to pilot the new technology because they knew the Forum could link them to the right type of companies they needed to participate in the test marketing. We introduced them to our network of retailers, hotels, cafes and by so doing provided great assistance in developing a new app that is now being rolled out across the country and beyond.

We also invite key note speakers to our events including Bobby Kerr, Louis Copeland, Terri Prone, Colm Lyon and Frank Daly. This provides members with a very useful opportunity to listen to and learn from real innovators in their fields.

Our next networking event is the Indian Summer BBQ in September.

Docklands Volunteer Clean Up – Business is Community

Through the Docklands Volunteer Clean Up the Forum is a leading force for positive business engagement with the local area. This engagement was a key policy objective of the DDDA⁷. The growth of this event is a testament to the growth of the Docklands Business Forum.

In 2011, a small group of fifteen volunteers from the Forum, with a little sponsorship 'in kind' from OZO and permission from Waterways Ireland, cleaned the surface litter floating on Grand Canal Dock.

In 2012, twenty-five volunteers painted the wall and railing along the old Boland's Mill site on Ringsend Road with some 'in kind' sponsorship from Crown Paints, OZO and An Taisce and permission from NAMA and Savills.

In April 2013 we had 80 volunteers working a full day on the Clean Up. We painted the hording along North Wall Quay and Mayor Street, cleaned out the litter from the Grand Canal Basin and cleared up the rubbish in Pearse Park. We received permission from Waterways Ireland, NAMA, Deloitte & Touche and WK Nowlan. We had 'in kind' sponsorship from An Taisce, OZO and Crown Paints. We received financial sponsorship from O2 Telefonica, Accenture and A&L Goodbody.

In 2014 we are planning a more ambitious and long term project that will make a significant contribution to restoring wonderful pieces of Docklands Georgian and Mercantile heritage. This fits in with a number of our aims and objectives identified on page 2.

⁷ Policy ED10 Page 69

Docklands Business Awards – Promoting an Enterprising Culture

Business lifts people out of poverty. It invents new products to improve standards of living and inspires new services to improve efficiency. Business creates the wealth necessary for society to progress.

In the Dublin Docklands Area Master Plan 2008⁸ the DDDA sets out a goal for promoting an enterprising culture in the Docklands area. The Docklands Business Forum now fosters this enterprising spirit by celebrating the extraordinary achievements of Dockland businesses with the Annual Docklands Business Awards.

In 2011, with the support of the Gibson Hotel, we provided a free reception with drinks and canapés and four awards presented with 65 people attending. The second year for any event such as this is the most challenging. In our second year we presented awards in ten categories, each one sponsored. Over 80 people, representing 50 enterprises, paid €45 a ticket to attend the function with guest of honour the Minister of State for Small Business, John Perry TD attending. It was a very successful night.

The 2013, to be held in the Gibson Hotel on the 28th November, Docklands Business Awards will see the event become the premier annual business occasion in the Docklands celebrating and promoting all the positive achievements of enterprise.

Docklands 2020 – A Vision for Growth

The Docklands Paradox

There is a paradox in the positive developments of the Docklands. For all the success in creating employment and development it stubbornly remains a largely untapped seam of opportunity for creating business, wealth and employment.

Untapped Opportunities

There are significant untapped opportunities for small and medium enterprises in providing products and services to the large local corporations and their employees. We have initiated networks that are bearing real fruit for our smaller member organisations in gaining access to decision makers in larger corporations. One successful meeting can be a ‘game changer’ for a small or new business. Companies sourcing products and services locally have a positive impact on the city environment and contribute to the green Docklands.

Re-animating the Quays – and creating employment

The refurbished quays, particularly Sir John Rogerson’s and North Wall are potentially fabulous urban recreation resources that go largely unused throughout the year. Partnering with Dublin Port for the Dublin Port River Fest is the first step the Forum is taking to promote this area as a family friendly day trip from the surrounding hinterland.

⁸ DDDA Master Plan 2013 Policy ED14 Page 69

We are in talks with Dublin Port about the viability of putting pontoons along the quay to facilitate yachting and boating enthusiasts visiting the city at the weekend and in time during the week. We will sign up local hotels, cafe, restaurants and shops to a Boating Voucher Book that will entice boats to visit the city for a day trip or overnight stay. Activity on the river will bring in activity on the quays. At first small mobile retailers could provide light refreshments for visitors. The Dublin Quays could quickly become as busy as Dun Laoghaire with day trippers.

Realising a Fashionable & Active Grand Canal Dock – and creating employment

There are equally exciting opportunities for the Grand Canal Dock as a water sports venue. The surrounding offices and apartments are packed full of young potential sports enthusiasts. The Waterways Ireland Docklands Summer Festival promotes this facility and the success of this event demonstrates a real appetite for this type of activity. Our water sports ‘Come Try It Sessions’ are always the first to sell out.

Attracting International Visitors

Both the Docklands Summer Festival and the Dublin Port River Fest have potential to become significant international festivals each with its own unique personality. The infrastructure in the Docklands is perfectly placed to assist this development. There are seven large hotels within walking distance of each event, all of which are members of the Forum. The DART and Luas rail networks are close by. The airport access through the Port Tunnel is excellent. There is even a ferry terminal nearby. Both venues are capable of safely catering for large crowds.

Celebrating & Promoting Enterprise

The informal and accessible (€45 a ticket) nature of the Docklands Business Awards make the event very popular. We have increased enthusiasm for this event each year and we are confident it will become an important occasion on the city’s business and social calendar.

Celebrating, rewarding and acknowledging our entrepreneurs and what they achieve for their businesses and society is an important goal of this event. Businesses are rewarded for standards of excellence in commerce, service provision, innovation and community engagement. We are passionate about growing this event and seeing it reach its potential.

Monitoring & Research

Two years ago the Forum carried out the first census of Docklands businesses. Over the course of four weeks two interns walked the Docklands, banged on doors, and compiled a comprehensive list of businesses. We are now finalising the first Docklands Directory of all businesses in the area. This will greatly assist us in creating business to business opportunities for local enterprises.

An Ambitious CSR Project

Through a larger and more sophisticated Volunteer Clean Up the Forum will, in partnership with local communities, bring back important pieces of Docklands maritime heritage. In spring 2014 will have 150 volunteers, supervised by architects, archaeologies and safety professions, begin work on restoring important pieces of Docklands commercial and maritime heritage.

Joining Up the Docks – Business, Community, Heritage

The Docklands presents the city with an unparalleled opportunity. It needs an organisation with the vision, connections and leadership to bring together the areas disparate and complementary resources to realise its promise. With modest resources the Docklands Business Forum can do the job.