

Docklands Consultative Forum

Paper on the Docklands Consultative Forum as
requested by the Joint Oireachtas Committee.

Alan Robinson

Paper on the Docklands Consultative Forum by the Docklands Business Forum to the Clerk of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht as requested by the acting chair of that committee on the 13th May last, Mr. Kevin Humphreys, T.D.

The Docklands Business Forum welcomes the setting up of a Docklands Consultative Forum (DCF). However we have a real concern that the lack of clear guidelines regarding its membership could result in a Forum that represents the Docks of the 1970s as opposed to the vibrant, competitive economy that is the Docklands of today.

The Bill should ensure that any consultative forum will be largely made up of local Docklands residents and business people. We note that the elected representatives must come from local Docklands electoral areas but the same stipulation is not made of residential or business representatives. To ensure fair representation we believe this criterion must be extended to cover the business representatives to be appointed to the Consultative Forum.

The membership as outlined states the Docklands Consultative Forum needs five representatives from statutory bodies. But there are over 500 statutory bodies in Ireland. It is most important to specify which organisations the City Council should consider as ones that will most effectively contribute to the Docklands continued success as a location for innovative job creation.

New residents in the Docklands area and small & medium enterprise have been almost entirely excluded from the various consultation processes that have taken place over the last eighteen months. This exclusion should not be replicated in the new Docklands Consultative Forum.

A New Beginning for Docklands

The Docklands Business Forum is strongly of the view that, to make any meaningful contribution to development of the Docklands, the membership of any committee set up to replace the DDDA Council must be dramatically different from its predecessor. There must be no defaulting back to failed structures of the past. The DCF must represent the Docklands of 2014 and should be fit for the purpose of giving relevant, measured, insightful and actionable advice to Dublin City Council.

- The DCF needs to be **transparent**. The wider Dockland communities must be made aware of its existence and its agendas, minutes and deliberations should be available to the public.
- The DCF needs to be **representative** of the new Docklands. The five residential representatives must come from both established and new communities. The number of representatives each community receives should be proportionate to their population.
- The five **business representatives** must represent Dockland businesses and not external representative bodies that will largely have second hand knowledge of local issues and will be unengaged by many subject areas to be dealt with by the DCF. There must be a balance in

the business representation between the corporate & hospitality sectors, small & medium enterprises and innovators & start ups.

- The five representatives from **statutory bodies** should also include state bodies and reflect the uniquely central role enterprise has played in the areas regeneration. IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland are obvious organisations to be included among these five.
- There needs to be a **term limits** for membership of the Docklands Consultative Forum to ensure new ideas are generated and members are aware they have only a set period to make their contribution. We therefore suggest members, other than elected members of the City Council, having served two terms on the DCF should no longer be considered eligible for reappointment.
- A **box ticking exercise** of filling the seats with the usual stake holder suspects should be avoided. State, semi state organisations and quangos are often over represented on committees such as the Docklands Consultative Forum. All of these organisations already have formal lines of regular communication with DCC and we see little virtue in the DCF providing them with an opportunity to repeat what they are already saying to the local authority elsewhere.

Docklands is a unique success and continues to provide unique opportunities for the future. If the potential for Docklands to become a world centre for international commerce, entrepreneurial innovation and a maritime tourism location is to be realised, it will take visionary leadership and innovative thinking. A good start would be a new beginning with a Docklands Consultative Forum made up of the best Docklands has to offer.