

# **DDDA (Dissolution) Bill**

**Opening Statement of the Docklands Business  
Forum to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on  
Environment, Culture & the Gaeltacht**

**Alan Robinson**

## **Opening Statement**

### ***Docklands Business Forum***

#### **Joint Committee on Environment, Culture & the Gaeltacht**

### **THE DOCKLANDS**

From its very inception, the raison d'être of the regenerated Docklands was to create jobs. A veritable wasteland of the 1980s' Docklands has transformed into a contemporary built environment and unique business location.

Dublin's Docklands is one of the most exciting places to work in the country. The area is home to one of Ireland's most significant economies with over 600 enterprises many of whom are world leaders in the areas of finance, legal, digital and communications. Spinning off from the presence of these large international enterprises are a diverse host of small and medium suppliers and innovative start ups. Employment in the area stands at over 40,000 with an excess of 25,000 employed in the IFSC area alone. This significant level of employment in high end jobs represents an exciting platform for future employment for the city if leveraged effectively.

The Docklands has great potential to continue generating jobs for the city. Significant areas of land remain undeveloped and would be ideal locations for large enterprises and centres for SME development. The landscape lends itself well to ambitious architectural possibilities as the area does not impinge on the city's historical Georgian and Victorian architectural core. In fact the Docklands hosts some of Ireland's most innovative buildings and reflects our creativity in managing the built environment. There are, as yet, largely untapped areas of job creation in the area, tourism and innovation being two.

### **THE DOCKLANDS BUSINESS FORUM**

The Docklands Business Forum (DBF) is a volunteer association of business people in the Docklands area. The DBF is recognised as the primary business organisation by the Dublin Docklands Area Master Plan 2008. 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 Docklands Business Forum is not just a business networking or representative body but has a wider role and grander ambition. We are working to ensure that Docklands realises its full potential and becomes a world centre for international commerce, entrepreneurial innovation and maritime tourism.

### **DUBLIN DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DISSOLUTION) BILL 2014**

The Docklands Business Forum welcomes the publication of the Draft General Scheme of Dublin Docklands Development Authority (Dissolution) Bill 2014. It is a potentially positive response to the disengagement of the DDDA over the last few years.

Furthermore, we believe the return of the responsibility, for the development of the country's premier business hub, to Dublin City Council is a positive development for both the Docklands and the City.

However, the DBF has a number of concerns regarding the Draft General Scheme of the Bill. We highlight our key concerns below and propose how they should be addressed;

### **1. Failure to acknowledge enterprise as the key driver of Docklands success**

- By setting out three principle areas of responsibility for Dublin City Council of social, economic and physical regeneration of the Docklands area the Bill fails to acknowledge the uniquely central role enterprise has played in that regeneration.
- While acknowledging that social and physical regeneration are important and are both areas local business is committed to, failure to identify the economic regeneration as a key strategic goal for the city will result in failure to focus resources effectively.

### **2. Unclear terms of reference for the membership of the Docklands Consultative Forum**

- We welcome the setting up of a Docklands Consultative Forum. 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.
- 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 the City Council should consider as ones that will most effectively contribute to the Docklands continued success as a location for innovative job creation.

### **3. Lack of transparency in the transfer the remaining cash and related assets**

- Any remaining cash and related assets should be invested in a clear and transparent fashion on projects consistent with the successful realisation of Docklands as an area of strategic economic importance for the country.
- The Bill gives the Minister the authority to 'transfer the remaining cash and related assets of the Authority to such body or bodies as the Minister deems appropriate'. It is the DBF's view that such moneys and assets that may remain should be invested in programmes and bodies which will further develop the docklands as a nationally important location for international commerce, entrepreneurial innovation and maritime tourism.

## **BREAKING WITH THE FAILURES OF THE PAST**

This is an exciting opportunity for the Docklands and Dublin. The very real successes of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority can be built on and broadened while avoiding the repetition of its failures.

The DBF is strongly of the view that the membership of any committee set up to replace the DDDA Council must be dramatically different from its predecessor if it is to make any meaningful contribution. There must be no defaulting back to failed structures of the past.

- The Docklands Consultative Forum must be robust, fit for purpose and transparent.
- Must be representative of the Docklands of today, an innovative entrepreneurial economy, punching well above its weight in high end job creation.
- There must be equal representation of new and indigenous residential communities.
- There must be significant representation from the business community representing the diverse nature of Docklands enterprises.
- There must be 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.
- A box ticking exercise of filling the seats with the usual stake holder suspects should be avoided.

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 maritime tourism is to be realised it will take visionary leadership and innovative thinking at both local and national level. A well constructed Docklands Consultative Forum and effectively targeted investment of resources are a first step.