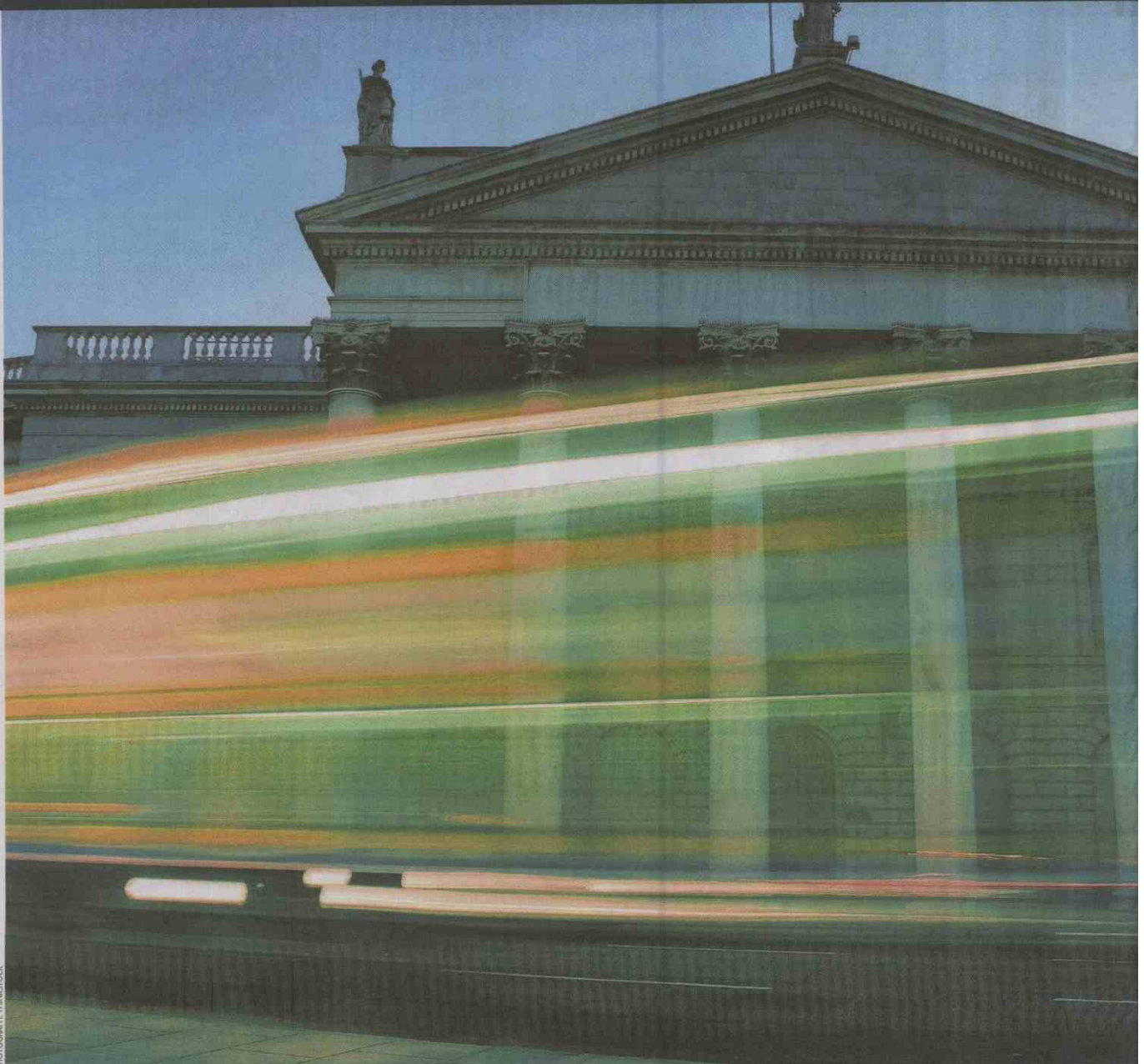




[ COMMERCIAL PROFILE ]

## DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL: INNOVATION DUBLIN



PHOTOGRAPH: THINKSTOCK

# Capital celebrates innovation

## Aid agencies, green-tech firms and IT companies are among the organisations getting together in **Dublin** at the month-long Innovation **Dublin** festival in October to look at the subject of innovation and how to harness it to achieve growth

**T**HE THIRD Innovation **Dublin** festival is set to be bigger and better than ever. It runs for a month and features hundreds of events and conferences aimed at giving Dubliners an opportunity to discuss, promote and celebrate innovation in the city.

The first festival in 2009 was held over a week and exceeded all expectations in attracting 40,000 visitors to 465 events. The following year brought even more success with the festival extended to 12 days. This year it kicks off on Monday, October 17th, and runs until Friday, November 18th.

"We are going for a longer period because we felt we tried to pack too much into a short time last year," explains Michael Stubbs, assistant **Dublin** city manager. "By spreading it out over a month, we will be able to hold a number of larger events and conferences and a series of smaller, more intimate events in between.

"The longer period will also allow people to attend more events and give them the opportunity to explore more of it. Last year we found that a lot of people couldn't get to all of the events they were interested in, so we have spread things out a bit more to address this."

Once again a major highlight of the festival will be the IBM SmartCamp. SmartCamps are exclusive events aimed at identifying early-stage entrepreneurs who are developing business ventures in line with IBM's Smarter Planet concept. The events are held in different locations around the world each year and, at each one, five finalists are selected for intensive networking with 25 world-class entrepreneurs, investors and industry experts. These mentoring and networking events put entrepreneurs in touch with experts who can help to grow their businesses.

"We have worked with IBM for the past two years and the collaboration has been very successful," says Stubbs. "Last year we hosted the international event for start-up businesses from around the world. This year it's the Irish SmartCamp focused on Irish companies.

"We see this as a major opportunity to help grow innovative businesses in the

city. Treemetrics, the company that won last year's event, has gone on to win major international awards and has gone from strength to strength since."

A key aim of the festival is to attract relevant major international conferences to **Dublin**. "The whole issue of clustering cleantech industries in Dublin in the An tSlí Ghlas or Green Way project has been a particular focus for us. An tSlí Ghlas is

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now a member of the Global Cleantech Cluster Association (GCCA). Membership of the GCCA offers opportunities to source international funding and expertise in green-tech sectors. The association will be holding a conference in **Dublin** on November 14th where we hope to showcase various Irish cleantech innovations."

Another interesting and quite different conference coming to the city during Innovation **Dublin** is that of Net Hope Global. "Most of the stuff we have done in previous festivals has been around research and development and innovation in private industry," says Stubbs.

"Net Hope looks at how IT can solve some of the problems facing aid agencies and address issues in such areas as the delivery of aid. It really caught our imagination and we are very excited to have the conference coming here."

It will bring together the chief technology divisions of a variety of humanitarian organisations and international charities and aid agencies to discuss the challenges facing them and how they can be tackled through innovation.

One of this year's events, which brings together the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and **Ibec**, arose from a chance meeting at *The Irish Times* Innovation awards earlier this year, according to Stubbs.

"We met some people from the University of Ulster at this year's event," he says. "We started talking about innovation

throughout the island of Ireland and, as a direct result of that, we have the Ibec-CBI Joint Business **Council** Education for Enterprise forum taking place at the IBM campus in Mulhuddart."

The Joint Business **Council** (JBC) is a coming together of **Ibec** in the Republic of Ireland and the CBI in Northern Ireland to work on creating the right environment for business on the island of Ireland, according to JBC projects manager Paula O'Dwyer.

"For the past two years, we have been looking at schools on the island of Ireland and have been running a project to develop enterprise education at primary and second level," she explains.

"We have also been looking at the position of enterprise on the curriculum, and the event in October will look at the role of enterprise education and at examples of how it is taught in schools in Ireland. It will also explore international best practice as represented by Finland where enterprise is very much embedded in the curriculum."

Stubbs says **Dublin City Council** is very happy with the cross-border dimension to the festival.

"We are working with the Irish Technology Leadership Group in Silicon Valley on the organisation of a two-day event with them and the University of Ulster to showcase what entrepreneurs are doing in Northern Ireland in terms of research and development. Hopefully our involvement with the university will be productive for both organisations in the future."

Another new event this year focuses on the concept of resilient cities. The two-day conference marks the beginning of a new five-year EU-funded project involving **Dublin City Council** and University College Dublin.

The Turas (Transitioning towards Urban Resilience and Sustainability) conference takes place on November 7th and 8th and is being organised by Dr Marcus Collier of the school of geography, planning and environmental policy at UCD.

The project aims to research, develop, demonstrate and disseminate transition strategies and scenarios to enable European cities and their rural interfaces to build resilience in the face of the most significant sustainability challenges facing them.

These challenges include managing resources such as water, handling pressure on infrastructure such as roads, and deciding how to grow cities in such a way that the ecology will not be affected.

Some of the most unusual and creative events at this year's festival are being led by **Dublin City Council's** arts office and involve artists working with technology company Shimmer Research.

"We have been involved in Innovation Dublin for the past two years but this year we wanted to do something we could spend a bit more time on," says **Dublin City Council** assistant arts officer Sheena Barrett. "We wanted to bring a group of artists together very early on so that they could work with Shimmer for as long as possible."

Shimmer is a small wireless sensor platform that can record and transmit physiological and kinematic data in real time. The tiny wearable wireless sensors can record movement, heartbeat, temperature and other biological data for use in a range of medical and other applications. The technology, which was developed in Ireland, is in use in 50 countries.

The company has offered to provide hardware and software development to support new ideas by four invited artists who will present the resulting works during Innovation **Dublin**.

Artists Bea McMahon, Cliona Harney, Saoirse Higgins and Michelle Browne are taking part in the collaboration with Shimmer and their projects are at different stages of development at present.

One project that is sure to attract a lot of public interest following the success of the Dublin Horse Show is McMahon's work with dressage horses. This work will feature a high-definition video of a dressage performance to music which has been created by the horse's own heartbeat and movements as recorded by Shimmer.

Browne's work features a performance that focuses on a gambler's response to gambling.

Higgins will be using the platform to map her journey and speed along the Camino de Santiago de Compostella while Harney is focusing on the history of medical technology on her project.

All four works will be presented as part

of one exhibition, *The Quantified Self*, at the **Dublin City Council's** Arts Centre on Foley Street in the city centre, during the festival. ■

This is just a small sample of the range of events being held as part of Innovation **Dublin** 2011. For further information on participating in the festival or attending any of the events, contact Economic Development Unit, **Dublin City Council**, Civic Offices Wood Quay, **Dublin** 8. E-mail: [info@innovationdublin.ie](mailto:info@innovationdublin.ie) or [edu@dublincity.ie](mailto:edu@dublincity.ie) See [innovationdublin.ie](http://innovationdublin.ie).



**Michael Stubbs:** 'We see this as a major opportunity to grow innovative businesses.'