

**Dublin Port Company**

**MP2 Project**

**Community Gain proposal**

**Information Briefing**

**May 2018**

**1. Background**

Dublin Port Company (DPC) is exploring a suitable Community Gain initiative to advance in the context of the MP2 Capital Project.

In assessing different options available for such an initiative DPC has engaged with Dublin City Council's Parks' Department to gauge the potential for the development of a City Farm on DPC owned lands adjacent to the Port Estate. There is the potential to create a community-based initiative with a broad appeal among different groups and interests within the community closest to the development site.

In carrying out an initial assessment DPC has examined similar City Farm projects in the UK, focusing on the London area in particular where there are 16 City Farms within the Greater London area.

**2. City Farms**

There are no City Farms in the Republic of Ireland – the closest to a City Farm concept is the Airfield Trust in Dundrum and Newbridge House, Donabate. The former is privately owned and charges a fee for entrance to the petting farm and other facilities. It operates on a 40 acre

site in South Dublin. Newbridge House is run by Fingal County Council and operates as a “petting” farm. There is a proposal for an urban farm in St Anne’s Park in Clontarf which will likely be in place by the end of 2018.

In the UK, City Farms are an established part of the urban landscape – with London alone having 16 City Farms. The farms were largely established in the late seventies or early eighties. The farms were established in response to the demolition of buildings or general urban decline, leaving many derelict sites which triggered local groups to take responsibility for their area. The groups began a number of community and youth projects including City Farms.

Hackney City Farm was a lorry park, Spitalfields was a railway goods depot and Vauxhall was a small vacant plot. Surrey Docks Farm is in the former docks area on the southern side of the Thames and occupies a former shipyard.

The size of the City Farms varies – for instance Hackney City Farm is 2 acres within a 40 acre park. Surrey Docks Farm occupies a 2.2 acre site, Spitalfields City Farm occupies an area of just over 2 acres, while Vauxhall City Farm has an area of 1.6 acres. Stepney City Farm is on a 3 acre site while the Kentish Town Community Farm is on a 4 acre site.

The City Farms in London which DPC visited in the course of developing a City Farm Community Gain concept all share some common characteristics;

- They are all developed on brownfield sites within urban areas and were formerly used for different industrial purposes
- Entry to each of the projects is free – although they do welcome donations.
- Each farm contains a mix of animals ranging from farm animals (sheep, pigs, donkeys, horses, cows and fowl), some wild animals (ferrets,) and domestic animals (cats, rabbits, dogs, guinea pigs, etc).
- All the farms devote areas to gardening and vegetable growing.
- All have an emphasis on growing and producing food.
- There are rooms available for community use.
- All have some level of catering provision – ranging from full restaurants to a coffee shack.
- They act as hubs for community engagement and interaction.

- Each provides rooms or spaces for different community based activities and groups.
- Each has an outreach element.
- There are strong connections with schools and education.
- They tend to have low staff numbers (no greater than 6) but all rely heavily on volunteers.
- They are run by Trustees and rely on significant amounts of public funding to operate – typically accounting for in excess of 50% of their funding – the balance is raised from sponsorship, corporate donations and specific revenue generating programmes run by the Farms (team building days, donkey rides, Christmas Fairs, etc).

City Farms are an established part of the urban network and landscape in London and attract considerable levels of support and visitor numbers – Hackney City Farm for example attracts over 100,000 visitors per annum.

### **3. Corporate structures**

Most of the City Farms are operated as charitable entities under the review of Trustees. The Trustees are typically a mix of representatives from the local community, people with business experience and individuals who are users of the City Farm.

In each case, the local council owns and leases the site to the city farms.

As referenced earlier the City Farms get some funding from the local authorities but rely mainly on donations and volunteers. Many of the farms also earn funds from on-site cafés and shops selling goods grown or made on the farm. Hackney City Farm derives a third of its income from the local authority, a third from an educational initiative at the farm and the remainder from fee generating activities on the farm (room rental, license fees from cafes, etc) – its total operating income each year is Stg £300,000

Staff roles on the City Farms typically include a Manager with other full time or part time individuals with specific roles in relation to administration, accounts, education and training, volunteering and livestock management.

#### 4. Main activities

The proponents of city farms are very clear that they are far more than urban zoos or “petting farms”. They are important community resources that help to build and support local community development and endeavour. They act as a hub for local community groups, social enterprises, training entities and schools. They also provide an important therapeutic and learning resource for segments of the community such as the unemployed or mentally and physically challenged.

Their main range of activities include;

- Animals: Each farm is home to a number of farm animals (some rare breeds) and are used as a learning resource for all who visit the farm. For those unable to travel, some of the farms have a mobile farm with animals for visiting outside groups.
- Gardens: Each farm grows plants and vegetables and provide several spaces, including allotments, for volunteers to learn how to grow food. Some of the farms use gardening sessions with certain groups as a form of therapy e.g. a small group of women from Syria meet to learn how to grow vegetables and use the time to talk about the conflict they have escaped.
- Education: All of the farms provide access to schools to learn about the farm, the gardens; growing vegetables and to take part in educational workshops. School trips are a key part of the life of the Farms.
- Festivals and markets: – each year the farms operate annual harvest festivals where they display their products and goods produced during the course of the year. Some operate weekly farmers markets.
- Lifestyle: – holding workshops and sessions on yoga, mindfulness and mental health awareness
- Other: Farming is not the only activity. The city farms host a number of other community groups and projects for example:

- Intergenerational Projects (bringing older and younger people together, building relationships and understanding between those who live and learn in the same community – but may not have opportunity to get together)
  - Beekeeping, pottery and food production
  - One farm brings in a number of spinners a few times a year who spin the wool from the sheep on the farm and use the wool to make products for sale in the shop.
  - A couple of the farms are also involved in the development and upkeep of local parks, including an orchard.
  - Heritage activities linked to the sites on which they are located.
- Umbrella Group: In the UK there is an umbrella group representing city farms and community gardens with a very good website based on the differing regional activities nationally – see; [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk) . In particular they have a very helpful video on the work of the different city farms and community gardens in the UK - <https://youtu.be/IHGYWixlB80> .

## 5. More information on London's City Farms

The websites of each of the different city farms provide good information on their work, scope and operations – for instance there is a great video on the work at Vauxhall farm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhbg929XFBs>

The main city farms which are of direct relevance to DPC and the community gain initiative on the MP2 Project are in London and include;

Spitalfields City Farm [www.spitalfieldscityfarm.org](http://www.spitalfieldscityfarm.org)

Vauxhall City Farm [www.vauxhallcityfarm.org](http://www.vauxhallcityfarm.org)

Hackney City Farm	<a href="http://www.hackneycityfarm.co.uk">www.hackneycityfarm.co.uk</a>
Surrey Dock Farm	<a href="http://www.surreydocksfarm.org.uk">www.surreydocksfarm.org.uk</a>
Kentish Town Community Farm	<a href="http://ktcityfarm.org.uk/">http://ktcityfarm.org.uk/</a>
Stepney City Farm	<a href="http://stepneycityfarm.org/">http://stepneycityfarm.org/</a>

## 6. A City Farm for Dublin

In assessing the potential for a City Farm in Dublin DPC has identified land on East Wall Road which was formerly used as a field for storing poles used for the distribution of electricity. The Polefield is a brownfield site of circa 1 acre which is located at the junction of the East Road and the East Wall Road and which DPC has identified as suitable for a Dublin City Farm. The site is ideally located as being close to the established community in East Wall, adjacent to the Port and directly adjacent to a local school. The site is relatively constrained given the scale of the UK City Farms, but there could be additional land available to be added to the City Farm Site.

The objective of the Community Gain proposal would be to establish a community based City Farm on site which would seek to offer the public a break from the urban grind as well as providing a focal point for a sustainable and environmentally attractive community initiative.

A key element to the project would involve the establishment of a Board of Trustees within a charitable governance structure. It is central to the success of the initiative that the local community are involved in the process at the earliest stage.

## 7. Feedback

Dublin Port Company would welcome feedback on this community gain proposal so that the Urban Farm concept can be advanced in the context of the MP2 Capital Project planning application being made to An Bord Pleanala in October 2018. To submit your feedback please

or to learn more about the City Farm proposal please contact Charlie Murphy in Dublin Port Company – [cmurphy@dublinport.ie](mailto:cmurphy@dublinport.ie)

