



**PLATO  
CLUSTERS –  
What and Why**

**W**hat is a cluster? Well, a very simple definition goes something like this.

'Clusters are geographic concentrations of businesses who share a commonality'. So what, you might ask.

Businesses gain competitive advantage in a number of ways, such as higher productivity, lower costs, better profit margins, innovative products etc. This is the usual generalised way at looking at competitiveness but it tends to ignore one vital element, i.e. location.

Businesses may gain competitive advantage not just by *how* they do things but *where* they do them and this is where the phenomenon of clusters comes into play.

The inherent economics of proximity can, over time, be enough to draw businesses into a particular location which then becomes a self-reinforcing cycle. It can happen by chance or by a region recognising the cluster potential within it and promoting a conscious, concerted effort to exploit and develop the potential benefits of such a cluster.

A cluster is not, by definition, just a collection of similar businesses, although it can be. It can be, more importantly, a mutually beneficial mix of suppliers, producers, distributors etc who share a region and work with each other to the benefit of all.

As an organisation with many years experience in facilitating and assisting business cooperation **PLATO** is looking at potential and existing Mayclusters within the economy with a view to making them a more vibrant reality in the coming years.

For more information on **PLATO** log onto - [www.plato.ie](http://www.plato.ie)

**Basketball Sponsors**

**C**hartered accountants Hughes Blake, based in Holles Street, Dublin, have renewed its sponsorship of Dublin League basketball team Glasnevin for a further three years. Glasnevin Basketball, playing from Sportslink in Santry, are unbeaten since Christmas in Dublin League Division 3. Pictured with the squad are Hughes Blake managing partner Neil Hughes and GBC coach John Kelleher.



**Bullying Code**

A new code of practice to prevent bullying in the workplace has been launched by the government. Legislation requires employers to manage work activities in such a way so as to prevent, as far as reasonably practicable, improper conduct or behaviour at work. The code places an emphasis on the resolution of incidents of bullying by using an informal process and professional mediation services.

**Tech Hotel**

The Stillorgan Park Hotel has beefed its business facilities by opening eight high-tech conference boardrooms. Each is equipped with a wall-mounted plasma screen, surround-sound system, plug and-play laptop facility and full video conferencing facilities. The new boardrooms are part of a €1.5m makeover at the south Dublin hotel.

**Energia Deal**

O2 Ireland is now sourcing its electricity from Energia, the Viridian subsidiary. Energia is supplying all sites controlled by O2 throughout the country, including all O2 retail outlets and O2 masts. A programme to switch over all O2 sites to green energy, including O2's headquarters in Dublin's docklands and its customer care centre in Limerick, was completed in March.

**Bleak Prospects**

Jobseekers aged over 50 face bleak employment prospects in the years ahead according to a new report. A survey by Manpower has found that only 9% of Irish employers plan to recruit older workers. Prospects for older workers are brightest in the hospitality and utility sectors where 14% of employers say they have strategies for both the recruitment and retention of older workers.

**Bank Profits**

IIB Bank has reported strong growth in all its activities for 2006. Profits after tax grew by 25% to €125m, with loans and advances to customers increasing by 25% to €16 billion. Total assets grew by 24% to €22 billion and the capital base grew by 25% in the year to exceed €1 billion. Residential mortgage advances grew by 24%, and SME business volumes increased by almost 30%.

**McEvoy Moves**

Corporate law firm McEvoy Partners has moved to Connaught House Burlington Road where rental levels were believed to have been set at €645 per square metre. McEvoy's move from Canada House follows significant growth in the law firm.

**Business Guide**

PwC has launched its latest 'Doing Business and Investing in Ireland' guide. Aimed at foreign investors, the publication provides a round-up of Ireland's tax, corporate, employment and environmental laws. The document is available on the PwC website.

**Porsche Sponsorship**

Porsche is to sponsor the Home Boat Show on Dublin radio station Community Mix 106.8FM. The sponsorship will last for 12 months and is worth €46,000 per annum. Tom Whelan of Porsche distributor Belgard Motors said: "The campaign focuses on the powerful new Porsche Cayenne 4X4 SUV."

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