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Helping small firms to up their game

by Eoin English

Key survival strategies for small businesses will be outlined at a showcase for businesses based on Cork's northside later this month.

The Northside for Business (Growing more than Apples) event will be chaired by former Bord Gáis boss, John Mullins, managing director of Augmentis and chairman of the Port of Cork, at Neptune Stadium on Sept 27.

The conference will be addressed by speakers from a range of backgrounds, including Susan Hayes, author of *The Positive Economist*, businessman Seán Gallagher, entrepreneur Pat Lynch, weekly newspaper editor Deirdre O'Shaughnessy and Yvonne Barry, senior partner, **Quintas**.

They will focus on the importance of connections and networks, survival strategies for small businesses, social media and branding, and gaining a competitive advantage.

An open showcase will be held in the stadium on the Saturday, Sept 28, featuring more than 60



John Mullins, Port of Cork chair, Lord Mayor Catherine Clancy, Entrepreneur Pat Lynch, and businessman Seán Gallagher at the launch of the event for Northside businesses.

local businesses.

The weekend event is part of a Cork City Council strategy to address the economic challenges facing the northside.

Lord Mayor Cllr Catherine Clancy said the continued success of the city depends largely on its local indigenous businesses who often work under the radar and support thousands of local jobs.

"Cork's northside has a rich history of successful family businesses which form an integral part of our local economy and I am delighted to see so many partaking and look forward to meeting with them over the weekend," she said.

Conference chairman John Mullins said the focus is often on multinationals.

"But we must remember to support our smaller businesses who have been the backbone of our community for decades,"

Start-up grant aid

■ New businesses who set up in vacant premises are to be offered grant aid to offset the cost of rates for up to two years.

Details of the 'business start-up scheme' in Mallow, Co Cork, were revealed yesterday. The scheme will effectively cancel out the cost of commercial rates on a new business premises for the first year, and a 50% reduction for the second year.

Independent Cllr John Paul O'Shea welcomed the plan which is modelled on a similar scheme introduced in Cobh last year.

"The scheme will assist in the letting of empty premises in the town as it is focused on giving assistance to those who choose to open up their business in a premises that has been vacant for over two years," Cllr O'Shea said.

"It is important to get the message out that Mallow is open for business and that this innovative scheme is available to people who want to start a business in the town."

Full details on the scheme are available from Mallow Town Council on 022-21542.

Mr Mullins said.

Tickets for the conference, which runs from 1.30pm to 5.30pm on Sept 27 are available for €25 and can be booked online

at www.northsideforbusiness.ie or call PLATO (021) 4320466.

Entry to Saturday's showcase event from 10am to 5pm is free.