



2011 Dragon Awards Dinner

Mansion House

Tuesday 20th September, 19.00 – 22.30

The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London

Alderman Michael Bear

Your Worships, Fellow Aldermen, Sheriffs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to formally welcome you to Mansion House for the 2011 Dragon Awards. This event is one of the *highlights* of every Lord Mayor's year, and it gives me great pleasure to celebrate *excellence* in social action.

Congratulations to all the Award applicants, for their hard work and sterling example.

Earlier this year, I visited London City Airport – winners of the 2010 Dragon Award for 'Economic Regeneration'.

And I saw the *extraordinary* difference their project has made to the community.

The airport worked with local agencies to provide training and support for unemployed Newham residents. And in just over a year, it has supported 136 local residents into employment – 87 at the airport itself.

This is a *wonderful* example of a project recognized by the Dragon Awards.

And all of you here tonight, represent projects which have made an *invaluable* contribution to your communities.

Since the Dragon Awards were launched in 1987, over 15,000 applications have been made.

Projects which protect and enhance the quality of life in our city, and make an important investment in our future.

And the work recognized by the Awards is more timely than ever.

We all watched, aghast, at events on our streets last month. When disillusion and disaffection, turned to destruction.

We border some of the poorest areas in Europe. Areas of deprivation which lack the skills and, *crucially*, the hope which we take for granted.

So we ‘the City’ have a key role to play in building a stronger civil society – by creating sustainable communities and helping those in need.

And I know this from my own professional experience in regeneration and construction.

Social action and sustainable development are in my own DNA.

Organizations which adopt *responsible* practices, in *cohesion* with their communities, have a commercial edge – particularly in times of economic hardship.

And I know first-hand the importance of supporting skills and innovation, through my work in Spitalfields. Work which was carried out in close partnership with the local community.

At Spitalfields, one in every four workers onsite were recruited locally.

And this built strong and valuable links with local businesses and residents – harnessing their knowledge to build a more sustainable development.

Now as Lord Mayor and the Head of the City of London Corporation, I hold a position which has worked for centuries to improve the lives of others.

- In founding and supporting academies in Islington, Southwark and Hackney.
- Through the work of the City Bridge Trust; which has given over £1/4 billion to charities in Greater London over the past 15 years.

- Through “City Action”, which has matched community organisations with 5,000 volunteers from 200 City businesses, over the past decade.
- And as Co-President of “Heart of the City”. Which provides vital – and free – advice on corporate responsibility, and links companies with community schemes.

And our City Livery companies are also an enormous force for good – a responsibility borne for hundreds of years. They do a huge amount to support education, employment and training, as well as initiating and funding a broad spectrum of charitable projects.

The work of all these organizations and initiatives go a long way to addressing the issues on our doorstep.

But the private sector has an increasingly important role to play, especially at this time.

Because the financial crisis has raised the stakes for all of us, and many charities are struggling to fund their work. Which is now more vital than ever.

So my challenge to business: is what more can we do?

Clearly, we have to find better ways of sharing the City’s success.

The City has to lead globally. But it must also demonstrate its benefits locally – the creation of opportunity through jobs and enterprise.

And we must encourage better integration, better access to services, and better understanding of all the City has to offer.

Financial Services realize more and more that, alongside profit, they must maximise benefits to society over the longer term.

One of my Mayoral priorities this year, was to raise the profile of socially-responsible products and services. And I am delighted that, for the first time, this features within the Dragon Award's Social Inclusion category.

We need to think *creatively* about the way we can fund and support vital work carried out by the third sector.

The City must promote new forms of investment.

To complement the more traditional sources of grant finance.

The Government has made this a top priority. And its Big Society Capital¹ is helping to spearhead social investment – providing £600m of new funding.

And I am *delighted* that we, the City, are also playing our part in developing this nascent social investment market.

¹ Formerly Big Society Bank

In July, I launched an important new report, under the snappy title: *Investor Perspectives on Social Enterprise Financing* – commissioned by the City of London, City Bridge Trust and Big Lottery Fund.

The report explores what *more* can be done to attract the talent and resources of institutional investors, who wish to generate both social and financial returns.

The Dragon Awards are a vital part of this groundswell of activity, which integrates business resource with community need.

Community organisations need businesses to develop long-term partnerships. Where volunteers apply professional and personal skills on an on-going basis.

So I am particularly encouraged by the participants in this year's Dragon Awards. They are all *excellent* examples of long-term, sustainable and effective social action. For which you should all be applauded.

We also want to recognize the vital contribution of the community organizations – and will be presenting an award tonight to one of our leading Community Partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am *incredibly* proud that the 80 entrants to this year's Dragon Awards have, between them, provided over 5,000 work opportunities.

They are playing a vital role in tackling local London unemployment. Particularly among marginalized groups, such as the homeless and ex-offenders. Who are in crucial need of support.

In total this year, entrants have helped over 90,000 people and provided nearly 40,000 hours of volunteering.

In monetary terms, this has a value of over half a million pounds. Although the *long-term* value of your contribution is priceless. It is *impossible* to measure the transformation your investment will stimulate in the communities you support.

And it is an inspiration to see so many heads of business 'leading by example'.

May I end by thanking my fellow judges for their work. And my special thanks to Martyn Lewis who will be announcing the 7 winners for 2011 – a great friend and long-standing champion of the Awards.

And finally, may I thank all the applicants. It has been my pleasure and privilege to hear about all you have achieved. You are making powerful, positive, and profound difference to our City – and our wider civil society.

I look forward to watching these Awards – and the many pioneering initiatives they represent – go from strength to strength.

Particularly next year, which is the Year of the Dragon in the Chinese calendar! A very good portent for success!

Thank you.

(1,174 words)