



## CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE FIRMS PREPARE FOR FESTIVE SEASON

**FIONA GARTLAND**

**BUSINESSES IN** Dublin city centre face a challenging Christmas, the chief executive of the Dublin City **Business Improvement District** said yesterday.

Speaking on Henry Street at the turning on of the Christmas lights, **Richard Guiney** said footfall in the city centre was down in September and October.

"We are hoping that perhaps people are holding on to their money and might spend over the Christmas period, but that will be dependent on their confidence," he said.

He believed people could be waiting until after the budget

before they decide on how much to spend.

"We are hoping family incomes will be protected so people will have a bit more confidence," he said.

Some 75,000 jobs, part time and full time, are dependent on consumer spend in businesses within the city centre.

Mr Guiney was joined by rugby star Gordon D'Arcy who flicked the switch that set the street alight just as dusk arrived in the capital.

Santa also made an early appearance via a purpose-built chimney, and told children they could post letters to him using red post boxes on Grafton Street and Henry Street. The event was part of a series organised by the Dublin City

**Business Improvement District** in the run-up to Christmas.

Elsewhere in the capital, the Crafts Council of Ireland called on Irish families to switch some of their gift spending from imports to Irish-made jewellery and crafts.

Speaking at the launch of an Irish jewellery exhibition at Dublin airport's Terminal 2, Brian McGee, market development manager, said Ireland's 1.4 million households are expected to spend on average €520 on gifts this Christmas, down from last year's average of €650.

"So it is critical that as many of those euros as possible are spent on authentic Irish-made gifts to sustain these creative jobs at home," he said.



Ireland rugby international Gordon D'Arcy with the Ice King and Queen at the turning on of the Christmas lights on Henry Street, Dublin, yesterday. D'Arcy flicked the switch that set the street alight just as dusk arrived in the capital. **Photograph: Arthur Carron/Collins**