Dunhill jobs conference attracts nationwide audience

DELEGATES travelled from every corner of Ireland to attend the annual National Jobs Conference that was held recently in Dunhill Eco-park.

This is the third year that the community-owned business centre has hosted such an event and this year's focus was on how rural communities can create sustainable employment.

The free event was a joint initiative between Dunhill Rural Enterprises and Waterford County Council and featured speakers such as Willie Moore, Chairman, Dunhill Rural Enterprises Ltd; and Marian Byrne, Head of the Food Industry Development Division at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Mr Byrne spoke about a recent report commissioned by the Department which gave an update on the progress achieved in the two years since the policy document ‘Food Harvest 2020’ was published and suggested that the growth in the agri-food sector could realistically generate around 43,000 additional direct jobs by 2020 up to three times this figure in indirect jobs.

The report also showed a confident and ambitious sector, which is dynamic, outward looking and has achieved real growth over the past two years despite a difficult and volatile global environment.

Eddie Downey, Chairperson of the Irish Farmers Association, expressed a belief that there is a capacity within this sector for growth and that Ireland can increase the amount of people we feed from the current figure of 35 million to 50 million by 2020 primarily by increasing our market share in the EU and by developing our markets to such areas as China.

Meanwhile, Sean Molloy, Director of Strategy and Supplier Relations at Glenbia - Dairy Ingredients spoke about the potential and opportunity for growth in dairy production within Ireland and also outlined Glenbia’s plans to build a new world-class processing facility in Belview to coincide with the lifting of milk quotas in 2015.

This facility will have two 7.5 tonne dryers, 19 million litres per week capacity with world-leading production, quality control and management systems technologies and best-in-class emissions, effluent and pollution control systems. The total impact of milk expansion post-2015 will be over 6500m per annum with 75% of this uplift in the South East region. The other speakers included: Scott Daughtery, Commissioner of Small Business, State of North Carolina; Denis McCarthy, Waterford County Manager; Marian Byrne, Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Eddie Downey, Deputy President of the IFA; and Peter O’Reilly, Waterford County Council.

Mr Downey believed that the success could be replicated by new enterprises in rural areas by using local natural inputs, producing efficiently in a sustainable way and developing a strong brand.

Pictured at the Dunhill Jobs Conference were the keynote speakers and organizers of the conference, standing, from left: Easy Reid, Waterford Co Council; Dr Robert Mauro, Boston College; Dr Sean Cooke, Dunhill Rural Enterprises; John Flahavan, Flahavan’s; Suzanne O’Brien, Mayo Food Case Study; Willie Moore, Dunhill Rural Enterprises; seated, from left: Scott Daughtery, Commissioner of Small Business, State of North Carolina; Denis McCarthy, Waterford County Manager; Marian Byrne, Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Eddie Downey, Deputy President of the IFA; and Peter O’Reilly, Waterford County Council.