



**PRESS RELEASE**

**23/04/10**

**Ó Cuív pledges to take on the challenge of moving people from welfare to work as quickly as possible**

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív T.D. today (*Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2010*) addressed the National Jobs Conference in Dunhill Ecopark, Dunhill, Co. Waterford. The main theme of the Conference, which was jointly organised by Waterford County Council and Dunhill Rural Enterprises Ltd, was 'How We Can Create New Enterprises and Jobs in Rural Ireland 2010-2016'.

Speaking with the delegates, Minister Ó Cuív said **"unemployment has a hugely debilitating effect on individuals, families, communities and our nation. This will be a great challenge in the coming months and years."**

The Minister went on to say **"the focus at today's conference is on creating competitive jobs in rural areas. We must always look at better ways of doing more with the resources that are there. Rural people are often the most dynamic as they are used to doing a lot of things for themselves. Changing the way we approach our rural resources can unlock the potential of new ways to create locally-based jobs."**

The Conference is showcasing five dynamic rural communities in Ireland which have excelled in rural development projects across a range of areas and international speakers will share their experiences of marketing Irish goods abroad and creating sustainable jobs in a region devastated by the loss of a major manufacturing plant.



Minister Ó Cuív spoke of the challenges in his own Department. **“One of the priorities I have been given in my new job is to place a particular focus on job activation in the current economic situation. We need to try to create a better future for the most vulnerable in our society. I intend to provide work activity for jobseekers, to upskill them and give them opportunities to get back into the mainstream workforce as speedily as possible. Some people see unemployed people as a burden – I see them as an under-utilised resource.”**

Minister Ó Cuív concluded by urging the delegates to find new ways to draw on our traditional strengths and to remain positive through the challenges of stimulating economic development in rural areas and creating opportunities for people to work.

**ENDS**