



**An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection**

www.welfare.ie

**Rural Social Scheme participants to assist
communities with weather-related difficulties**

Éamon Ó Cuív, TD, Minister for Social Protection has said this morning (2 December 2010) that the participants of his Department's Rural Social Scheme (RSS) have been requested to prioritise weather-related work as long as the current cold period continues.

During the very cold weather at the start of the year, Rural Social Scheme participants responded within their rural communities to weather-related difficulties which impacted particularly on older people.

The Minister said: "At that time, Rural Social Scheme participants made it their priority to support the vulnerable and isolated within their localities. They assisted in a number of ways including gritting footpaths and housing estates; cutting and delivering fire wood; supplying fresh water; buying and delivering groceries, picking up prescriptions and in some areas, providing a friendly call service to those living in isolation."

Minister Ó Cuív added: "Rural Social Scheme participants are now once again engaging in these tasks. As the Scheme is a locally-based programme its participants can be quickly redeployed to respond flexibly to local priorities. Utilising the 2,600 RSS workers is a very effective way of providing these services particularly because of their local knowledge and first-hand experience of rural conditions."

Editor's note:

Rural Social Scheme



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The Rural Social Scheme currently provides additional work opportunities and income for certain categories of low income farming and fishing families, in the provision of essential community services and also in the development and maintenance of rural walkways and rural tourism. A spin-off is that the “meitheal oibre” or team-work nature of the Rural Social Scheme tackles the rural isolation that has come with modern mechanised farming practices.

The Rural Social Scheme involves 2,600 workers and is managed by 35 local development companies countrywide.

See the Department of Social Protection website for more detail of the Rural Social Scheme

<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Schemes/RuralandCommunitySupports/Pages/RuralSocialScheme.aspx>