



## **Minister Burton and Martin Murphy launch regional roadshow programme to promote JobBridge opportunities**

- ***in excess of 2,600 opportunities available on JobBridge website –***
- ***1,124 individuals have commenced their work placement -***

The Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD and Mr. Martin Murphy Managing Director of HP Ireland and chair of the Steering Group on the National Internship Scheme, today Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September, highlighted the success of JobBridge in its first ten weeks. The scheme already has in excess of 2,600 opportunities available on its website, with 1,124 individuals placed in internships. Minister Burton was speaking in Athlone at the launch of the regional roadshow programme for JobBridge.

A number of companies have already signed up to the scheme and the purpose of the regional roadshows is to ensure that a wide geographic spread of companies from across Ireland are informed on the benefits of engaging in JobBridge. It is also hoped that the roadshows will assist with the recruitment of interns to fill available positions.

Since its commencement, a variety of measures have been introduced to protect an intern and safeguard the scheme from abuse. In order for an application from a host organisation to be approved, it must meet a number of criteria to ensure that the potential internship is one of quality. The JobBridge team have a strict vetting process in place to ensure that proposed internships meet the quality requirements.

Commenting on the success of the scheme to date Minister Burton said, *"JobBridge is a central pillar in the Government's Jobs Initiative strategy as it assists those seeking employment to gain valuable experience while enhancing their prospects of securing employment. I am delighted with the current high level of interest from companies in the JobBridge scheme. At the time of JobBridge's launch I issued a call to action to the companies and I am very pleased that so many have actively engaged with the programme. It is my intention that the series of roadshows that commence today will encourage companies throughout Ireland to participate in JobBridge and offer valuable internship opportunities to those seeking employment"*.

The Minister continued, *"As there are in excess of 2,600 internship opportunities currently available on the JobBridge website, I am now calling on prospective interns to seriously consider participating in the JobBridge scheme. There are internships available to individuals of all skill levels ranging from those who left school early to highly qualified graduates of third level. The beauty of JobBridge is that it can offer a diverse range of jobseekers an opportunity that will at the very least enhance their employability."*

Marking the launch of the road shows, the Chair of the Steering Group and Managing Director of HP Ireland, Mr. Martin Murphy said, *"I am extremely impressed by what has been achieved since this scheme was launched on July 1st. We have had over 100 interns starting every week which augurs extremely well for us to deliver and exceed on our objective of 5,000 employees for the life of the scheme."*

*This is a model that can deliver real value to all involved. For interns, it offers a real chance to equip them with skills, getting them back into the workplace with the opportunity to secure long term employment. Employers, on the other hand, can benefit hugely from the talented people we have in this country, who can bring new and fresh ideas to the company.*

*JobBridge now must become hardwired into the fabric of opportunities for people who are looking for a chance to gain valuable work experience and develop their skills. We look forward to building on the success of the programme to date so that employers and employees can benefit alike from this scheme."*

The JobBridge scheme aims to provide those seeking employment with the opportunity to gain valuable experience, maintain close links with the labour market and to enhance their skills and competencies through an internship. JobBridge, which is an entirely voluntary scheme offers opportunities to up to 5,000 individuals of all skill levels, including the low skilled, and provides them with an enhanced prospect of securing employment in the future.

Over the next five weeks four road shows will take place in Athlone (14<sup>th</sup> September), Galway (28<sup>th</sup> September), Cork (30<sup>th</sup> September) and Limerick (12<sup>th</sup> October). The Minister will attend the first road show in Athlone with Martin Murphy, Managing Director of HP and Chair of the Steering Committee who will also attend in Limerick on October 12th. Sean O'Driscoll, member of the steering committee and Managing Director of Glen Dimplex will oversee the road shows in Galway and Cork.

**ENDS**

## Notes for Editors

### Breakdown of Internship opportunities available (by region)

Region	Number of Internships
City Centre	<b>497</b>
Dublin South	<b>355</b>
Fingal	<b>220</b>
Midlands	<b>228</b>
Mid-West	<b>213</b>
North-East	<b>174</b>
North-West	<b>123</b>
South-East	<b>301</b>
South-West	<b>281</b>
West	<b>221</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,613</b>

### Questions and Answers

**1. How much will a participant get while participating in JobBridge?**

People taking up an internship will get €50 per week in addition to their existing social welfare payment.

Example of the weekly rate of payment for a jobseeker who is currently receiving the maximum rate of Jobseeker's Benefit

Personal rate (includes €50 top-up payment)		€238.00
Maximum Rate of Increase for a Qualified Adult, where applicable		€124.80
Each qualified child (See note)	Full rate	€29.80
	Half-rate	€14.90
Potential total weekly payment for a married jobseeker with two children		€422.40

Note: A participant will be paid an increase of €29.80 pw for each qualified child if they qualify for an increase for a qualified adult or if they are parenting alone. If they do not qualify for an increase for a qualified adult, they may receive a half-rate qualified child increase.

**2. Will participants keep their secondary benefits (e.g. medical card, rent supplement, mortgage interest supplement, fuel allowance, etc) while participating in JobBridge?**

Yes, participants will keep any additional benefits that they were receiving immediately prior to taking up an internship.

**3. How long will the scheme last and for how long can a person participate in it?**

JobBridge will run for two years so applications for internships will continue to be accepted until June 2013. The duration of individual internship positions will be from six months to a maximum of nine months.

**4. Who will be eligible to participate in JobBridge?**

JobBridge will be available to individuals who are on the Live Register and have been in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance/Benefit or signing on for credits for at least 3 months.

**5. If an individual is not on the Live Register can they qualify?**

No, however, if an individual signs onto the Live Register and waits for 3 months, they will then become eligible.

It is important to note that an unemployed individual can sign on the Live Register for credits and not be in receipt of any Social Welfare payment.

If an individual is not willing to wait for three months they may apply for a work experience placement under the FAS Work Placement Programme immediately.

**6. How will the weekly €50 allowance be paid to interns?**

Participants on JobBridge will be paid an internship allowance by the Department of Social Protection via an electronic funds transfer into their bank account. The internship allowance will consist of their existing social welfare entitlements plus the weekly top up allowance of €50.

**7. How can jobseekers apply for internships?**

All internship opportunities in host organisations will be advertised on the dedicated website [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie). Provided an individual has been on the Live Register for at least 3 months they can apply via this website directly to the relevant host organisation for a specific internship. It is then a matter for each respective host organisation to decide how to select their preferred candidate. It is envisaged that many organisations would use a competitive interview selection process but this is entirely a matter for them.

Once an individual has been selected as a host organisations preferred candidate they are provided with an eligibility form which the individual must bring to their local social welfare office. The local social welfare office will complete this form and if the individual is eligible the intern will submit the form back to the Employment Services Division of FAS, who will inform the host organisation that the internship can commence.

**8. Are there any conditions for the employers or organisations (which will be known as host organisations) which will make places available?**

- A host organisation must have a minimum of 1 full time employee who is employed for 30 hours or more per week (i.e. on payroll and subject to tax and PRSI).
- The internship will not be provided to displace an existing employee. The scheme administrator reserves the right to review cases where it is reported that this is the case.
- The host organisation’s Public/Employers Liability insurance and Motor Insurance, if applicable, will cover any internships on the National Internship Scheme.
- The host organisation must be fully compliant with current workplace health and safety and all other legal requirements.
- The host organisation must be a legal entity and/or a charity recognised by the Revenue Commissioners (with a CHY number).
- The host organisation may not have vacancies in the area of activity in which the internship is offered.
- If Garda Vetting applies to the internship, the host organisation must ensure that the vetting process is applied.
- The maximum number of internships a host organisation can offer at any one time is dependent on their number of full time employees:

<b>Number of Full Time Employees</b>	<b>Number of Internships</b>
1-10 employees	1 internship place
11-20 employees	2 internship places
21-30 employees	3 internship places
30 + employees	20% of the workforce to a maximum of 200 internships whichever is the smaller

Local branch offices of national organisations will be regarded as an individual host organisation for the purpose of the National Internship Scheme.

## **9. What responsibilities will the host organisations have?**

The responsibilities of the host organisations will be to:

- Identify and advertise an internship opportunity to jobseekers;
- Select a candidate for an internship through an agreed application process;
- Provide the opportunity for the intern to learn or apply key skills in a workplace setting;
- Appoint a designated person to act as mentor to the intern;
- Work with the intern to monitor and develop their skills;
- Abide by the Standard Internship Agreement; and
- Return a short online monthly compliance update to confirm the internship is progressing as agreed.

## **10. How do organisations apply to participate in the scheme?**

Organisations apply through the dedicated website [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie) to register their wish to provide an internship opportunity. Applications will be vetted, and if approved they will be advertised on the website.

## **11. Who will administer JobBridge?**

JobBridge will be administered by the Employment Services Division of FAS which is in the process of being transferred to the Department of Social Protection.

This is the first step in the establishment of a National Employment and Entitlements Service which will integrate the employment support services currently provided directly by the Department of Social Protection with those currently provided by FÁS into a single service.

This will provide a 'one stop shop' for people wishing to establish their benefit entitlements, seek employment and/or advice about their training options. The focus will be on the individual, their rights to a payment, their access to an opportunity to engage in employment, training or upskilling, as appropriate and their responsibility to engage with such opportunities.

## **12. What measures are in place to prevent displacement and abuse of scheme?**

A variety of measures have been introduced to protect the intern and safeguard JobBridge from potential abuse. In order for an application from a host organisation to be approved it must meet a number of criteria so as to ensure that the potential internship is one of quality. These include the following:

- that the internship does not allow the intern to work unsupervised;
- that the internship is not displacing an employee; and
- that the intern accrues significant experience throughout the entire internship.

In addition, internship opportunities have been removed from the JobBridge website in cases where companies had previously advertised them as paid employment.

In order for an internship to commence a Standard Internship Agreement must be signed by both the intern and the host organisation. This Agreement clearly stipulates the terms of the internship including the maximum number of hours an intern is expected to work in a week, their entitlement to rest breaks, annual and sick leave.

In order to protect the integrity of the scheme these control mechanisms are vital. To ensure compliance the Department of Social Protection and the Employment Services Division of FÁS are monitoring internships to ensure that they are of sufficient quality and that both host organisations and interns are abiding by the spirit and the rules of the scheme.

This will involve the Employment Services Division of FÁS undertaking a desk monitoring approach. Each host organisation will be required to submit monthly compliance reports verifying that the internship is proceeding as set out in the Standard Internship Agreement. Employment Services will undertake random site visits of internships as part of this process. The random site visits will commence shortly.

In addition a 'whistle blowing' feature has been introduced, where any individual who suspects that an internship may be in breach of the scheme's criteria, including in cases of suspected displacement, may contact the National Call Centre. All such claims will be investigated.