



Welcome to the twelfth edition of the Skills Newsletter. It is hard to believe that we are half way through the summer season already and I am sure for many of you the holidays are a long distant memory. As always I am keen to highlight the work that the Department is doing and this edition is packed full of news and information.

Firstly, I am delighted to welcome Stephen Magorrian, Managing Director of Botanic Inns, as the new Chairperson of the Future Skills Action Group for Hospitality and Tourism. I wish him every success in the role and I look forward to hearing about the group's progress in the coming months. If you want to find out about this group then please contact Sian McCleave at [sian.mccleave@delni.gov.uk](mailto:sian.mccleave@delni.gov.uk) or telephone 028 9044 1778.

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On the 26 May, I made a statement to the Assembly about the new 'Skillsafe' scheme introduced by my Department to assist Apprentices who have been placed on short time working as a result of the economic downturn. This scheme ties in closely with the support made available through Invest NI's Short Term Aid Scheme. Skillsafe commenced on 8 June and further information can be obtained by contacting 02890 441 880 or emailing [skillsafeni@delni.gov.uk](mailto:skillsafeni@delni.gov.uk) or visiting the website [www.skillsafeni.gov.uk](http://www.skillsafeni.gov.uk).

Finally, my Department hosted its 4th Annual Skills Conference on 27 May with this year's theme concentrating on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). The event was a great success with the influential and motivational speakers giving us all something to think about. There must be a real focus now on STEM as we prepare for the future of our economy and much work is being done with the schools, colleges and universities. I would anticipate that the jointly commissioned Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning independent STEM Review will be published by the end of the Summer and I will keep you updated on its progress.

**SIR REG EMPEY MLA** - Minister for Employment and Learning

### Management Matters

Newly published research reveals that Companies who apply best-practice management techniques perform significantly better than those who don't.

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### Department hosts 4th Annual Skills Conference



The Minister is pictured at the Skills Conference alongside Richard Noble.



Pictured L-R: Seamus McKee (compere); Damien McDonnell; Richard Noble.

The Department for Employment and Learning hosted its 4th Annual Skills Conference at the end of May 2009. The theme for this year's event was Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, otherwise known as STEM. The event aimed to highlight the real need to motivate and inspire our young people to study STEM subjects and to raise awareness of their importance now and for the future of the Northern Ireland economy. The Conference guests were given the opportunity to hear from a number of speakers on the day, to include Richard Noble, Director, [Bloodhound project](#); Damien McDonnell, Matrix; and Bill McGinnis, NI Adviser on Employment and Skills. The Conference was brought to a close by the Department's Permanent Secretary, Aideen McGinley. Further information about STEM and the conference can be obtained by emailing [sian.mccleave@delni.gov.uk](mailto:sian.mccleave@delni.gov.uk) [Read more >>](#)

### 'New' Skillsafe scheme

The Minister made an announcement on 26 May about a new [Skillsafe](#) scheme which was created to assist Apprentices who have been placed on short time working as a result of the current economic downturn. The purpose of the scheme is to fill the Apprentices downtime with accredited training that will contribute towards their Apprenticeship. 'Skillsafe' is open to those Apprentices in the manufacturing engineering sector and came into effect on 8th June 2009. For further information visit [www.skillsafeni.gov.uk](http://www.skillsafeni.gov.uk), email [skillsafeni@delni.gov.uk](mailto:skillsafeni@delni.gov.uk) or telephone 02890 441 880 [Read more >>](#)

### Vocational Qualification Reforms Conference

A major NI Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (VQR) conference took place on 3 June, and was a resounding success. The event aimed to bring together all the key stakeholders in NI and beyond to debate how the programme could be implemented most effectively in NI. 160 delegates heard from a range of keynote speakers including Sir Reg Empey, John Landeryou, Chair of the UK VQR board, John McNamara, Chief Executive of the Alliance of SSCs, and David Hunter, Chair of the NI Alliance of SSCs. Their presentations can be accessed under 'hot topics' on the [DEL homepage](#). A number of workshops were run and the full spectrum of VQR issues discussed with the outcomes then fed back to the conference to form the basis for a report to be published on the NI VQR website.

This will be available in the next couple of weeks. The report will help to shape the communication and implementation strategy in NI. For further details on the NI VQRP please contact Nick Gibson on 028 9025 7973 or email [nicholas.gibson@delni.gov.uk](mailto:nicholas.gibson@delni.gov.uk).

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### **Hospitality and Tourism Future Skills Action Group**

The Future Skills Action Group for Hospitality and Tourism (FSAG) is delighted to welcome on board its new Chairman, Stephen Magorrian.

Stephen is the current managing director of Botanic Inns Ltd and will continue the great work of Howard Hastings who stepped down as Chairman in March.



The FSAG was established in late 2008 to work with People 1st to identify the main challenges facing the Hospitality and Tourism sector. The Group, consisting of employers, representatives from Higher Education and Further Education, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, People 1st and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, is now close to finalising a 12 month Action Plan to address the issues identified. For further information, contact Sian McCleave on 028 9044 1778 or email [sian.mccleave@delni.gov.uk](mailto:sian.mccleave@delni.gov.uk)

### **Talentmap - Making access to skills simpler in Northern Ireland**

Sir Reg Empey has welcomed "**talentmap**", a new, UK-wide project supported by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, which will enable employers in Northern Ireland to get more comprehensive, practical help and information to boost the skills of their workforce than ever before. **talentmap** is a unique framework that provides a single view of the entire education, employment and skills landscape in clear, simple language. It uses state-of-the-art technology to interrogate and search education, employment and skills-related sites and ensure the most relevant information is returned to the user. The web-tool will start by searching around 100 main sites with more being added as time goes on. **talentmap** also allows employers to develop and share skills development plans internally with colleagues, and externally with suppliers. It can be accessed at [www.talentmap.ukces.org.uk](http://www.talentmap.ukces.org.uk) and through dozens of partner sites.

### **Vocational Qualifications (VQ) Day**

The Department celebrated VQ Day at an event held in the Waterfront Hall on 24 June where Sir Reg announced the winners of the Northern Ireland Learner of the Year and Young Learner of the Year awards. For further information please contact Linda Berg on 028 9025 7506 or email [linda.berg@delni.gov.uk](mailto:linda.berg@delni.gov.uk)

### **Recognition of Training in Employment**

The Minister has announced a support programme for employers who provide high quality training for their employees to have that training accredited nationally. The pilot programme commenced in April and will

run until March 2010. A seminar took place in May to raise awareness of the programme and to provide advice to organisations on its implementation. Employers, sector skills councils and awarding organisations heard about the success of a similar pilot which was run by QCA in England. A steering group has been established by the Department to oversee the pilot and to provide support to employers. For further information contact Nick Gibson on 028 9025 7973 or email [nicholas.gibson@delni.gov.uk](mailto:nicholas.gibson@delni.gov.uk)

### **NI Apprentices recognised at National Mechatronics final**



Northern Ireland apprentices Patrick Gillian (pictured right), who works for Fivemiletown Creamery and Roy Hitching, who works for FG Wilson, have scooped gold at the National Mechatronics final, held in Middlesex University. This competition has been designed for competitors working or studying in the manufacturing and automation industry. The two competitors fended off stiff competition from 5 other teams from across the UK. Also successful at the

competition were apprentices Daniel Latimer, who works for FG Wilson, and Fergal Doherty, who works for Schrader Electronics who scooped the bronze medal. These competitors will now have the opportunity to compete to be part of the team that will represent the UK at the WorldSkills competition in 2011 which is being hosted by the UK in London. The competition is supported by UK Skills, the Sector Skills Council SEMTA (represented in Northern Ireland by the Engineering Training Council) and the Department for Employment and Learning.

### **Labour Market Information**

Labour Market Information fact- sheets have been produced in conjunction with the Department's Careers Service, Analytical Services and the Sector Skills Councils (SSC) to help clients become more familiar with entry requirements, current vacancies and skills shortages within each Industry. These are available under the Job Information section on the Careers Service website [www.careersserviceni.com](http://www.careersserviceni.com)

In addition, the Department has also updated the [Labour Market Profiles](#) for each of the Workforce Development Forums (WDFs). These profiles examine labour market issues within each of the WDFs and provide information on employment, qualifications, vacancies, redundancies and annual development demand by occupation.

### **National Training Awards 2009 - Update**

Over the summer months the rigorous judging process for the National Training Awards in Northern Ireland commences. The Awards are the UK's premier training recognition competition for individuals and organisations and the judging process will identify the exceptional entries that will become the 2009 winners. Northern Ireland competes with the other UK regions i.e. England, Scotland and Wales for this coveted training recognition. Winners are recognised at an awards ceremony at Northern Ireland level and ultimately at a national level. This year's NI event will take place on Thursday 13 October 2009 in the ornate surroundings of the

Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office and will be hosted by Olympian Colin Jackson. The UK national ceremony will then take place in December in London. If you are interested in entering the 2010 National Training Awards, or would like additional information about the awards please contact Catherine Millar on 028 9025 2474 or email [catherine.millar@delni.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.millar@delni.gov.uk)

### **Investors in People - Helping employers meet current challenges**

As the business environment has recently changed, so has the delivery of [Investors in People](#) (IiP) to help employers' better meet current challenges. A UK-wide employer consultation was undertaken to determine how IiP can and should improve to best meet employers' needs. The focus for working with IiP will now be to enable employers to link business priorities with the associated people issues to address any areas for improvement. This new approach is the culmination of a two-year programme, developed and piloted with a wide range of employers. An evaluation showed that 89% of employers considered these new choices to have added value. IiP has introduced new levels of recognition - Bronze, Silver and Gold levels, as well as a form of recognition for long term holders of IiP accreditation. These additional accolades reflect the achievements of businesses working beyond the core IiP Standard and celebrate sustained commitment to continuous improvement. Some 1,500 Northern Ireland companies are currently using IiP to help improve and transform their businesses. For further information about IiP contact Jillian Gilmore at [jillian.gilmore@delni.gov.uk](mailto:jillian.gilmore@delni.gov.uk) or telephone 028 9044 1794.



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