

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

I would like to welcome you all to the eighth edition of the Skills Newsletter. This is indeed a very special edition much of which has been devoted to our new Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills, Bill McGinnis.

The appointment of Bill to the role is good news, not only for government but for those of you in business and industry. He will undoubtedly champion employment and skills issues and his experience as a business man himself will be invaluable.



Bill's appointment carries a dual role as he will also act as the Northern Ireland Commissioner on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills representing Northern Ireland's interests. He will provide a voice for the Northern Ireland business community, raising issues effectively to the UK Government and giving clear advice on developing policies and measures. I very much look forward to working with Bill during the coming months.

Having been with us only a matter of weeks Bill has been actively involved in some of the Department's key events, namely the All-Island Skills Conference and the National Training Awards. These events were attended by many business leaders, employers and organisations. For any of you who were able to make it along to either of these events you will agree that they were a resounding success and showcased the work being done to encourage us all to invest in our skills.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Bill every success in his new role.

SIR REG EMPEY MLA – Minister for Employment and Learning

Appointment of the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills

The Minister for Employment and Learning, Sir Reg Empey announced the appointment of Bill McGinnis to the role of Northern Ireland Employment and Skills Adviser. As part of his new role Bill will also undertake the role

ISSUE 8 – NOV 08
"SPECIAL EDITION"

[Subscribe to Newsletter](#)

Labour Market Information:

- [Economic Overview](#)
- [Economic Bulletin](#)
- [Labour Market Bulletin](#)
- [NI Skills Monitoring Survey](#)

How can DEL help employers?

- [Essential Skills Training](#)
- [Training for Success](#)
- [Investors in People](#)
- [Steps to Work](#)

- [Bridge to Employment](#)
- [Disablement Advisory Service](#)
- [Employment Rights Service](#)
- [Employment Service](#)
- [Leadership and Management](#)

Contact us:
 Skills and Industry
 Division
 Department for
 Employment
 and Learning
 Lesley Buildings
 61 Fountain Street
 BELFAST
 BT1 5EX
Successthroughskills@delni.gov.uk
Tel: 028 90441813

of Northern Ireland Commissioner on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and represent Northern Ireland's interests. The posting commenced in October 2008 and will run until the end of September 2011.

[Read more >>](#)

Profile: Bill McGinnis, CBE, DL

Bill began his career in export marketing with Sperrin Metal Products, a locally based manufacturer of racking, shelving and storage systems. He represented Sperrin in the Arabian Gulf and went on to become Chairman and Managing Director, prior to establishing his own business in 2000. During his time with Sperrin, the company won numerous awards in recognition of its export achievements. Bill has extensive business experience in a number of fields and is currently Chairman of the McAvoy Group (off site building solutions). He is also a Board member of Tourism Ireland, Chair of Air Route Development Ltd and a non executive director of several public limited companies. He has been a Board member of a number of public and private sector organisations, such as Invest Northern Ireland, and the Sector Skills Development Agency and he is a former President of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce.



Pictured with the Minister following his appointment is Bill McGinnis.

Following on from his OBE in 1997, Bill received a CBE in 2004 for his services to industry. He holds an MSc from the University of Ulster, from which he also received an honorary Doctorate in 2008 and was named Marketer of the Year 2005. Bill firmly believes that his success is down to investing in building the skills of all the people in his organisation. This investment kept the company competitive and gave them confidence to look for new markets and business opportunities. Speaking about his new appointment Bill called on employers to sustain, or even increase their investment in training during this critical downturn period.

A message from Bill McGinnis

I am delighted to have been appointed as the first Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills at this challenging but exciting time in the development of our economy. It is clear that business and government will

be operating in a much more challenging environment for some time to come. Whilst businesses are facing a difficult period, it is more critical than ever that they recognise the value in developing their workforces to overcome the present short term pressures, but, more importantly, to sustain and indeed build for the longer term.

Over many years I have seen first hand the benefits of investing in a well trained and skilled workforce. This new post will allow me to work closely with businesses and government to bring about change and to directly influence the current and future skills agenda.

There are three key challenges to be addressed; We must work to ensure that the non working population who aspire to employment are provided with the requisite skills to get them into work; that those about to enter the workforce are better equipped to contribute productively; this requires as a minimum the fundamental building blocks of essential and employability skills. We also need a wide range of technical and higher level skills, and in particular to satisfy the demand for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills; and that we have the systems in place to support those already in work to enhance their contribution and to sustain and grow key sectors, such as ICT, Financial Services and Life Sciences. These challenges can only be addressed fully by businesses and government working in partnership. One of my key priorities is to examine the current skills advisory infrastructure with a view to ensuring a more simple and responsive system. My aim is to make it easier for employers to influence the skills agenda and make it more responsive to the needs of our economy. It is critical that any new arrangements meet the skills needs of our local businesses, and, ultimately allow our workforce to meet its full potential. I look forward to working in my new role as Adviser on Employment and Skills and in representing Northern Ireland on the Commission to ensure that our needs are fully taken into account. Should you want to contact me then please email deirdre.mcgill@delni.gov.uk or brian.patterson@delni.gov.uk or alternatively call 028 9025 7849.

The UK Employment and Skills Commission

In addition to his Adviser role, Bill's appointment also sees him undertake the role of the Northern Ireland Commissioner on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. Bill will be fully involved in all the Commission's work and will ensure that the interests of our business community are reflected in their plans and that the devolution considerations are taken into account when making recommendations.

The Commission aims to benefit employers, individuals and government, advising how improved employment and skills systems can help the UK become a world-class leader. It aims to strengthen the employer voice and provide greater employer influence over the employment and skills systems. The Commission consists of 20 UK Commissioners from a wide range of backgrounds, chaired by Sir Mike Rake and with an additional 3 country Commissioners, representing each of the devolved administrations. In Northern Ireland the Commission reports to Sir Reg Empey, Minister for Employment and Learning.

The role of the Commission

Since its inception in April 2008, the Commission has forged ahead with various projects that will have a major impact on the employment and skills agenda across the UK. These include the development of a new, web-based tool, provisionally entitled "TalentPlan", which will make it quicker and easier than ever before for employers to navigate their way through the education, skills, and employment systems. Employers will be able to

access advice, information, contacts, details of grants, recruitment provision, training courses and training providers which will enable them to create a bespoke employment and skills development plan for their entire organisation.

Reform and Relicensing of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)

The Commission is also responsible for the funding and performance management of the Sector Skills Councils. With the UK Commission for Employment and Skills recent publication of the timetable for Relicensing, the 25 SSCs are currently preparing for assessment across the UK. Licensing assessments will be carried out by the National Audit Office and licences will only be granted by Government to those SSCs who can meet the robust standards laid out in the technical prospectus. Work will begin this month and every SSC is expected to have gone through the process by Autumn 2009. In order to be relicensed, each SSC must demonstrate that they have the confidence and support of employers within their sector. Stakeholder and employer comments will also inform the assessment of the SSCs performance. To participate in the process and to obtain more information about SSC re-licensing log on to www.ukces.org.uk

First Engagement: The All Island Skills Conference 2008



Pictured L-R: John Martin, OECD; Michael Carr, EURES; Bill McGinnis, Employment and Skills Adviser; and Sir Reg Empey.



Pictured with Bill is L-R: Miriam OCallaghan, RTE Broadcaster; Gerard Diver, Lord Mayor, City of Derry; and Anne Heraty, Chair of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

The [All Island Skills Conference](#) took place on 9 October in the Millennium Forum in Londonderry and was jointly hosted by the Northern Ireland Skills Expert Group and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. The theme for the event was *Building Better Skills Together* and attracted presentations from leading national and international topic leaders. The event was the first engagement in the newly appointed Employment and Skills Adviser, Bill McGinnis' diary. Bill took to the stage and presented the All Island Skills Study alongside Anne Heraty (pictured above). The presentation noted that the study was a comprehensive analysis of skills demand across the island and an improved evidence base for further developing the all island skills profile. You can [view Bill and Anne's presentation](#) plus all other presentations on the Department for Employment and Learning's website.

A copy of the All-Island Skills Study is available to download from the Department for Employment and Learning's website or by contacting Research and Evaluation Branch on telephone 028 9025 7609 or email reb@delni.gov.uk.

Other News and Information ...

The Software Professional Course

This 35 week graduate conversion course is designed to give non-IT graduates the skills to work in the ICT industry in Northern Ireland. Participants receive a training allowance of £120 per week while in training and have the opportunity to earn up to £500 in bonuses depending on performance. The Department offered 126 students a place on the course which commenced in September 2008. If your firm would be interested in getting involved with the course or if you have any queries you can contact Colin Woods on 028 9044 1834 or colin.woods@delni.gov.uk

'C'Mon Over' Campaign Update

The 'C'Mon Over' campaign continues to progress and the new advertising campaign is really starting to gather pace throughout the UK and Ireland. The Department attended a number of Graduate Fairs in October which were a great success. Joining the Department were many NI employers to include: NYSE Euronext Advanced Trading Solutions; Abacus Recruitment; Liberty; Citi; Kainos; Blueprint; and Randox. If you would like to get involved with the campaign then email us at cmonoverni@delni.gov.uk or visit the website at www.cmonoverni.info

European Qualifications Framework

The [EQF implementation](#) for lifelong learning is a common European reference framework which enables European countries to link their qualifications systems to one another. It is a translation device making qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and system in Europe. Implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in the UK has begun. The results of the exercise to reference the levels of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to the levels of the EQF will be published in March 2009. Prior to this date there will be an opportunity to submit responses on a proposed referencing of the levels. Timescales for this are available on the website www.ccea.org.uk.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Caroline Egerton at email cegerton@ccea.org.uk or telephone 028 9026 1452.

Do you need help with your recruitment?

Ever thought of using the Department's online recruitment service? Employers and Recruitment agencies can avail of our vacancy listing service - at no cost - by simply logging on to [EmployersOnline NI](#). Your vacancy is then automatically displayed on [JobCentreOnline](#) and throughout the Department's network of Jobs and Benefits Offices. If you would like to find out more, call 0800 3289135.



If you wish to prevent further communications from DELNI please [Unsubscribe](#)