

## **Industry Prepares for Future**

Even though it has been one of the hardest hit industries during the current economic downturn the Quarry Products Industry is looking to and preparing for the future.

In 2008 the Quarry Products Association of Northern Ireland (QPANI) in partnership with South West College and the Sector Skills Council, Proskills, developed an innovative course, the National Diploma in Civil Engineering with Quarrying Specialism.

The course, which was launched by the Minister for the Department of Employment and Learning, Sir Reg Empey, provides a 'gateway' for 16-22 year olds to enter the Quarry Products Industry. Gordon Best, Regional Director of QPANI, said "We are delighted and proud to be partnering South West College and Proskills in implementing this innovative Diploma Course. The quarry, concrete and asphalt manufacturing industries are some of the oldest industries we have in Northern Ireland. History and current surveys show that when people come into the industry they stay in it. In normal times our industry provides stable and long term employment. A QPANI survey in 2007 showed that 60% of the industry's workforce was over 40. This was the catalyst for us working with and developing close links with all of our further education colleges, schools and education departments".

Currently the course at South West College has 10 students on the Diploma Course. They recently spent five weeks on work placement with their sponsoring companies. Recently the students, in an event organised by South West College and QPANI, had the opportunity to highlight what they had learned during their placement through a presentation to all the sponsoring companies' Senior Directors. The winner was Ciaran McGinley, 22 of Dunagannon, who spent his five week placement with Cemex NI (see picture).

Gordon Best added "This diploma course provides an excellent opportunity for young people to enter an exciting industry. QPANI are placing great importance on the course and hope that over the next number of years to roll it out around other Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland. Despite the serious challenges we are facing at present resulting in the loss in 2008 of 25% of our workforce, our Association and Industry are looking to and planning for the future."

### Notes for the Editor

The Quarry Products Association NI represents approximately 95% of companies involved in the supply of quarry products to the Construction Industry in Northern Ireland. Our Association draws its membership from companies engaged in providing primary aggregates, the processing of recycled and secondary materials, the production of downstream products such as asphalt, lime mortar, ready-mixed concrete, precast concrete and road surfacing contracting. The Quarry Products Sector now employs over 3500 people across Northern Ireland and has a turnover of some £500 million.

Sponsoring companies of the National Diploma in Civil Engineering Course with Extractives Specialism are

John McQuillan Contracts  
Whitemountain Quarries  
Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division  
Quinn Group

Acheson and Glover  
Clarke Group  
Lafarge Cement  
Cemex NI

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