

Rehab has reinforced its position as Ireland's premier recycling operation as the countdown continues on tough new EU regulations.

A new national e-recycling service was launched by Minister for the Environment Dick Roche TD in Tallaght just over 200 days before the introduction of stringent new EU laws governing the disposal of electrical and electronic waste.

The service – a partnership between Rehab Recycle and Indaver Ireland – has the capacity to meet the entire annual target set for Ireland by the EU under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive which comes into effect in August. Eighteen people, the majority of whom are workers with disabilities, are already employed in the new service and it is expected that this will rise to 40 by the end of the year.

Through its plants in Dublin, Cork and Galway, Rehab Recycle will be able to reprocess some 50 tonnes of WEEE each day – the equivalent of around 2,000 TV sets. This means it can surpass Ireland's initial target of 16,000 tonnes of WEEE – approximately four kilos for every man woman and child in the country – which must be met in 2006.

Following the introduction of the

Directive, consumers will be entitled to return WEEE either to where it was purchased or to an authorised collection point free of charge. Producers will become responsible for the final disposal of goods such as fridges, microwaves, mobile phones, TVs and computers. Anyone found guilty of putting these into landfill could face substantial fines of up to €15 million and possibly a jail term.

“Current estimates suggest that each person generates around 20 kilos of WEEE a year and to start at a fifth of that is no soft

Ashley Balbirnie, CEO, Gandon Enterprises, with Minister for the Environment, Dick Roche TD, and John Johnston, commercial manager, Indaver Ireland.



recycling

WEEE Are

target,” said Rehab Recycle general manager, Bob Rowat. “In addition to having the capacity to meet all of Ireland's obligations in recycling WEEE, we are developing sophisticated systems to collect it throughout the country.”

As well as collecting from local authority bring sites and recycling parks, we have agreements with many multinationals and large indigenous companies to collect very

significant volumes of waste products on their behalf.

Additionally, Rehab is the lead player in developing a Europe-wide agreement to collect WEEE between Workability International, which represents organisations providing employment for a combined total of over two million people with disabilities, and a consortium of some of the world's largest manufacturers of electri-



the Best!

cal and electronic goods. “A crucial element of the new service,” said Mr Rowat, “is the involvement of Indaver Ireland. Operating since 1977, the company has a considerable track record in delivering high quality, cost effective services in the specialist hazardous and non-hazardous waste markets in this country. It also has significant experience of recycling WEEE through its operations in Belgium.”

Mr John Johnston, Indaver Ireland’s commercial manager, said the launch of the facility in Tallaght was an important first step in the co-operation between Rehab and Indaver Ireland. “Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment is one of Ireland’s fastest growing waste streams and this facility, as well as the others we have planned with Rehab, will go a long way towards addressing the infrastructural

deficit that currently exists in dealing with this waste type,” said Mr Johnston.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Roche expressed his support for the initiative. “It is great to see Irish companies like Rehab Recycle in partnership with Indaver meeting this challenge. The facility will provide a real solution to producers in Ireland to ensure that we meet our environmental obligations in this regard fully. It is an excellent and innovative scheme and I wish all involved every success.”

Rehab Recycle has also been a major player in Irish recycling for many years. Now, through its nationwide network of more than 1,800 bring sites, the company reprocesses the vast majority of consumer waste glass in Ireland – more than 160 million bottles and jars in 2004, as well as recycling large quantities of cans, textiles, cardboard and paper.

It could happen to anyone. Goretti Dixon was enjoying the holiday of a lifetime in Los Angeles in February 2002, when she tripped and banged her head while crossing the road. It was a moment that was to change her life forever, as Goretti had sustained a head injury from the impact of the fall. Here she tells her story.



"I didn't realise it at the time, but the fall I had while on holidays was to have a huge impact on my life. After spending 12 days in hospital in the States, I came home to Galway, ready to return to my normal life.

But I was very emotional, very angry and very frustrated, and I didn't know why. I thought I was going mad. I found it difficult even to do the simplest of chores. I had no energy and was tired all the time. Concentration was difficult and I found it hard to retain information and follow conversations, particularly in a group setting.

Despite these signs, I thought there was nothing wrong with me. I guess I just didn't want to admit the truth. I tried to get back to a normal routine and I thought I'd

services

get back to work, but it just never happened.

It wasn't until August 2002 when my GP referred me to Headway Ireland, that I at last began to understand what had happened to me. It was reassuring to know what was wrong, and that I wasn't going mad. But I can be quite stubborn and it took a long time for me to accept the situation, and to come to terms with the impact that the brain injury had on my life.

For me, acceptance came after I started attending Quest Brain Injury Services in

Goretti's

Galway. My sister had heard about the Quest service on local radio and suggested that I give it a go. I entered the programme in April 2003 with no real expectations.

I was very emotional at the time. My confidence had gone. I knew that I would not be able to return to my job in the catering trade, and I thought I was useless. I felt very isolated and alone. It was difficult for others to understand what I was going through. I looked healthy, no different from the way I looked before. But inside, I was different. When I joined Quest it was such



Pictures.

Left: Goretti Dixon (third from left) pictured at the Rehab Council Awards for Innovation last year. Also pictured are Liam Hogan, chairman, Rehab Council; Denise Donlon, co-ordinator, Quest; Dr Donal McAnaney, director of Research and Innovation, Rehab Group, and Quest client, Joe Kennedy.

Above:

Goretti Dixon (third from right) pictured enjoying a trip away with her Quest colleagues.



Quest

a relief to talk to other people who knew what I was going through. Not only was it comforting to know that I wasn't alone, but it was really reassuring to see how well others on the programme were doing.

Quest takes a very holistic approach. They cover all aspects of living with a brain injury, from social skills and confidence building, to strategies designed to deal with memory loss and lack of concentration.

They also offered classes in creative writing and art. I particularly enjoyed the

art classes, which were very therapeutic and relaxing. I had painted before, many years ago, and it was wonderful to rediscover something that I loved to do.

Quest's individual personalised programme means that you follow a programme specifically designed to your own needs, goals and abilities. Everybody's needs and goals are different, they could be vocational, such as getting back to work or college, or they may be social, such as developing independent living skills.

I love learning and through Quest's voca-

tional studies class I heard about the VTOS Media Studies course. The course includes elements of media analysis, print journalism and creative writing, sounded interesting and I thought it would be worth enrolling in.

It was a big challenge for me to enter mainstream education. But the time I spent in Quest had boosted my confidence and I believed that I could do it. I'm six months into the Media Studies course now and am really enjoying it.

I know now that I'm never going to be the person I was before. Quest has helped me to come to terms with that. Before I joined Quest I was lost, scared and felt so alone. With the help of staff at Quest, I've come to accept my brain injury, and to recognise my own strengths and weaknesses. I've got to know myself a lot better, and I like the way I am now. In fact, I prefer the 'new me'. I've been given a second chance at life, a chance to start again and I'm looking forward to the future."

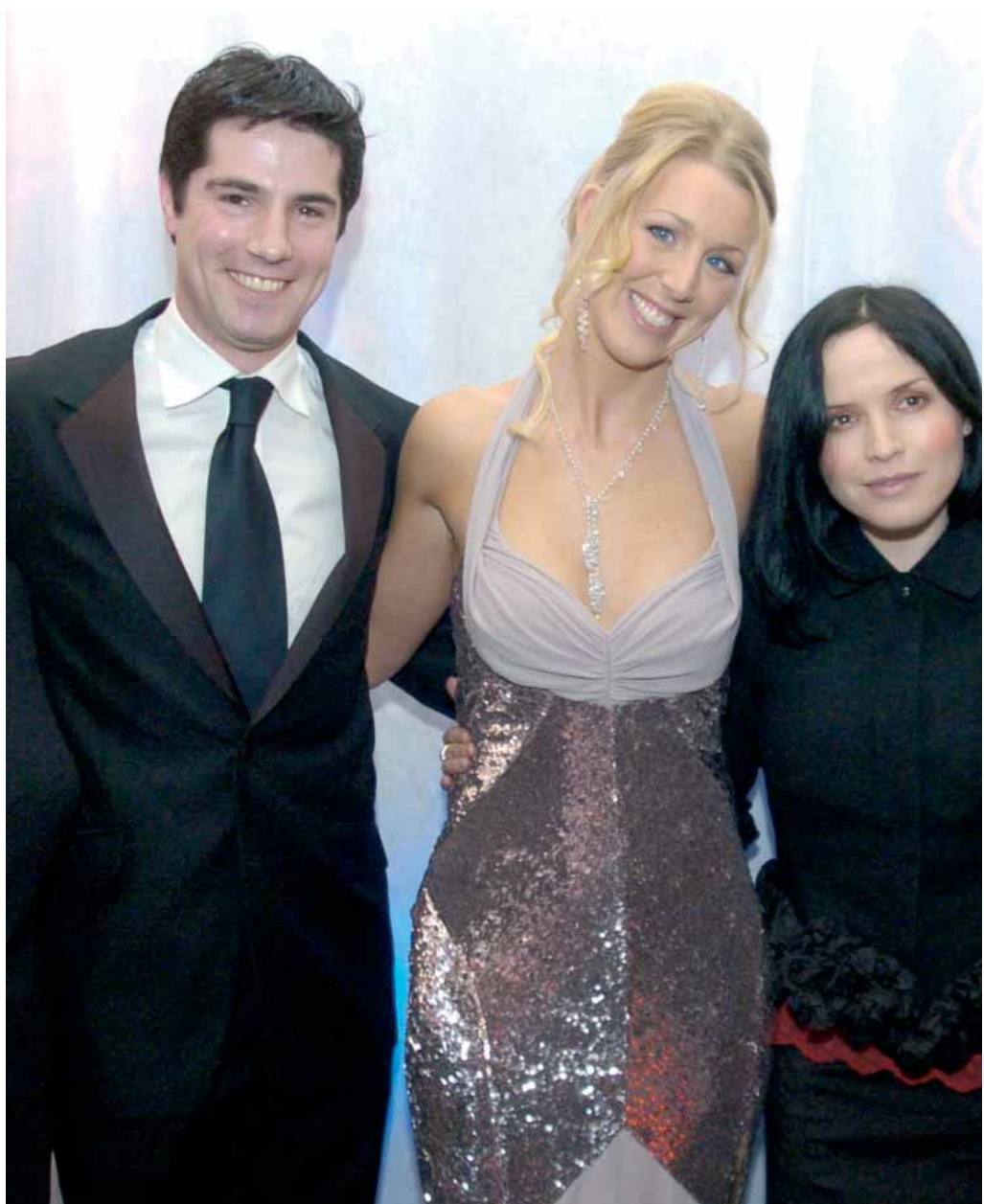
A new awards scheme devised in conjunction with Gandon's Access Ability programme has shown that many business leaders have begun to recognise the abilities of people with disabilities.

Let's face it, it's not often that you see Roy Keane in a tuxedo. But the Republic of Ireland soccer international and Manchester United captain ditched the soccer jersey when he attended the glittering inaugural O2 Ability Awards in Dublin Castle last February.

Roy Keane was joined by guest of honour, An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, as well as many top names from the sporting, music and entertainment worlds such as Andrea Corr, Eddie O'Sullivan and Craig Doyle at the televised event which sought to recognise and applaud companies demonstrating best practice in employing people with disabilities.

More than 100 companies from throughout Ireland entered the awards scheme, which was set up by the Aisling Foundation in partnership with Gandon's Access Ability programme. The scheme, the first of its kind in Europe, seeks to commend those companies that recognise the very real contribution that people with disabilities can make to their business.

However for many the real benefit of participating in the O2 Ability Awards scheme is that it assists companies, both large and small, to develop best practice in the area by providing a detailed feedback report to each company who qualified for the assessment stage of the awards. While recognising achievements in the employment of people with disabilities, the awards are also about continuous improvement, about encouraging business leaders to



Pictured at the Ability Awards presentation ceremony in Dublin Castle were BBC presenter, Craig Doyle; Caroline Casey, founder of the Aisling Foundation; singer, Andrea Corr, and Ireland rugby manager, Eddie O'Sullivan.

Top companies show willing for the able

awards



Above:
Caroline Casey, (right), with
Danuta Gray, CEO, O2 and chair-
man of the final adjudication
panel, Communicorp's Denis
O'Brien.

ask questions, to assess themselves and their progress.

Designed by Gandon Enterprises and spearheaded by Access Ability personnel, the unique assessment process included several stages and addressed all aspects in the employment of people with disabilities such as environmental accessibility, policies, procedures and attitudes. The assessment process involved ten teams of auditors, all experts on managing disability in the workplace, travelling the country visiting each workplace, and talking to management and staff in order to fully assess each company's preparedness for disabled employees.

Speaking at the event, An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, made a special point of congratulating Access Ability on the assessment process and on its contribution to the overall success of the awards

scheme. The winning companies were chosen by two panels of distinguished adjudicators that included many well known names from the business world and disability sector, among them, Denis O'Brien of Communicorp; Turlough O'Connor, director general of IBEC; Danuta Gray, CEO, O2 Ireland; Mary Davis, CEO, Special Olympics, and Angela Kerins, chairperson, National Disability Authority.

In addition to the fifty companies honoured on the night, five received best practice category awards and two - Superquinn and Kerry Local Authorities - were named as the first recipients of the overall Best Practice Companies Awards for their commitment to giving career opportunities for people with disabilities.

Receiving the award for overall Best Practice in the Private Sector, founder and president of Superquinn, Fergal Quinn said that for over the past 30 years the company has recognised that people with disabilities are as capable of contributing to the business as anybody else. Superquinn currently employs between 75 and 80 people with disabilities, and has introduced a number of innovative initiatives such as the 'buddy'

mentoring system to support people with disabilities in the workplace.

Kerry Local Authorities won the award for Best Practice in the Public Sector. The county's regional authorities got their awards for their track record in offering careers to people with disabilities. In the mid-1980s, Kerry County Council and the town councils of Killarney, Tralee and Listowel adopted a policy of making the county a more accessible environment for everybody. The authorities then set out to improve their performance in hiring people with disabilities. They now employ a total of 80 disabled people, which accounts for five per cent of the total workforce. This figure is much higher than the standard set by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, which states that three per cent of the public service workforce must be made up of people with disabilities.

Another local authority, South Dublin County Council, took the award in the recruitment and selection section. Accepting the award, Mayor of South Dublin, Robert Dowd, said that hiring people with disabilities had brought a new dimension to the service the authority provides.

Other major winners on the night included Dublin Bus, who won the award for leadership; the National Aquatic Centre won the overall award in the customer service category, while the Public Appointments Service won an award for environmental accessibility. In the private sector, Jurys Doyle Hotels took the career progression award.