

Emigrants could be home for good if we all played our part, ConnectIreland campaigners say

HUNDREDS of young Irish people who were forced to emigrate could be home, not just for Christmas but for good, if everyone played their part in attracting expanding companies into Ireland, those behind an innovative jobs for Ireland campaign say.

Their comments came as 19 emigrant players involved in the 'Home to Hurl' charity fundraiser arrived home from Hong Kong, Sydney, London and elsewhere and teamed up with ConnectIreland, the GAA and Dublin Airport Authority as part of a global awareness campaign which it's hoped will bring even more jobs to Ireland over the coming years.

Passengers arriving into the busy airport have been getting their picture taken with the Liam McCarthy and Sam Maguire cups over the past week, as well as learning how they can play their part with ConnectIreland, the company responsible for delivering the Government's *Succeed in Ireland initiative*, in association with IDA Ireland. Working together, the Irish public at home and abroad has helped to bring 36 companies to Ireland, which will result in over 1,000 sustainable jobs.

GAA President Liam O'Neill says emigration has hit clubs hard and added that the Association is encouraging its members to register with ConnectIreland and pass on information about global companies expanding into Europe.

"As we enjoy our games at home and look forward to celebrating Christmas in our clubs and in our communities, we spare a thought for the many players we have living abroad at the moment. They watch our games in far-flung places. We would love to have them back at home with us again but in order to do that, we need to create jobs. ConnectIreland is a simple way to make those jobs a reality," he said.

Among the 'Home to Hurl' players back on Irish soil for the fundraising charity match in their local club of Gortnahoe Glengoole in Tipperary on St Stephen's Day was Kevin Maher, who was greeted by family, friends and clubmates in Dublin Airport on Tuesday 23 December.

Kevin left Ireland in 2009 in search of work. After working in Australia and England, the pull of home drew him back but when he was unable to find work once more in his trade – carpentry – he was forced to emigrate for the second time and has spent the last number of years living in Melbourne.

"It's great to be back home for Christmas and to get a chance to hurl on home soil. It's been far too long and I've really missed it so I can't wait to celebrate with my family. It's great to see ConnectIreland helping to create opportunities in Ireland so people can stay at home," he added.

With an army of connectors across the globe, ConnectIreland has mobilised the people of Ireland to play their part in creating employment opportunities at home. Simply by striking up

a conversation and asking companies to consider Ireland, connectors can help create jobs as well as earning a sizeable financial reward, ConnectIreland COO, Joanna Murphy, explained.

“A network of 40,000 connectors are now keeping their eyes and ears open for opportunities and already Ireland is reaping the benefits. Our campaign here at Dublin Airport has been a phenomenal success.

“We need to play our part now so that these players gathered here today, players in clubs and communities all over Ireland and many more scattered around the globe have jobs and a future in Ireland. All someone has to do is pass on the information about an expanding company. We will partner with the IDA and do the rest and bring those jobs home,” she vowed.

DAA Chief Executive Kevin Toland said Dublin Airport was happy to support the ConnectIreland initiative.

“Dublin Airport provides a key location for ConnectIreland and I’m delighted that the presence at Dublin Airport has been responsible for 300 direct jobs being created. Leads generated from the Dublin Airport have also created a further 69 active discussions which have the potential to create a further 3,000 jobs.”

For more information or to register as a connector, log on to www.connectireland.com.

To donate to the ‘Home to Hurl’ fundraiser in aid of North Tipperary Hospice and Scoil Aonghusa Special National School, log on to www.idonate.ie/event/925_home-2-hurl.html.

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