

Dragon says 'I'm in' to entrepreneur scheme

by Catherine Ketch

THE only drawback that Bobby Kerr, of RTE's *Dragon's Den*, could find with the new entrepreneur programme from Macroom E was that there are only ten places on it. "There should be 100 or 1,000 places on this," he said at the launch of Green Shoots at the Castle Hotel on Monday.

Kerr, invited by chairman of the Lee Valley Enterprise Board, Gerry Gray, has invested in seven businesses from the popular RTE show and said he was encouraged by the Green Shoots programme.

The seven entrepreneurs in which he had invested shared a will to succeed. "They would climb over barbed wire to make sure that they get where they want to go," he said. Kerr said he was energised by working with them.

"The future of employment is about the man with a van who employs three or four people, eventually employing ten people," he said. "Manufacturing is central. We've got to start making things, and making things that can be exported — that is really where the future lies."

Kerr said he "doesn't do negativity" and was happy to help where he could and had never had State funding for his businesses.

He emphasised the importance of providing a stepping stone for people to get off the dole. He told the large gathering that he got up early every morning and bounced into work because he loves it.

Minister Batt O'Keeffe spoke for the first time, in Macroom, in his new capacity as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation. "All indications are that we are now bottoming out, in terms of the recession, and that, in the latter part of 2010, we are going to have growth," he said. That growth, he



Gerry Gray, chairman, Lee Valley Enterprise Board, Bobby Kerr, of *Dragon's Den*, and Padraig O'Driscoll, Lee Valley Enterprise Board, at the Green Shoots launch at Macroom E.

Picture: Catherine Ketch



Eibhlín Ní Lionaird and Cormac Ó hAodha, from Cuil Aodha, at the launch of the Green Shoots programme.



Sandra Coombes, Coombes HRM, Elizabeth Howard and Marie Harte, of FÁS, and Eileen Ryan, National Learning Network, at the launch of the Green Shoots programme for start-up businesses.



Donal Ó Liathain and Lean Ní Ciobhain, of Udaras na Gaeltachta, at the launch of Green Shoots, a new programme for start-up businesses at Macroom E.

said, would continue into 2011, and, in 2014, reach 4%, and growth would mean jobs.

Sean O'Sullivan, South Cork Enterprise Board, said Macroom E had spawned many initiatives.

Mayor of Macroom, Cllr Martin Coughlan, said Macroom was lucky to have a positive initiative in the town. Enquiries should be made to the managers, he said, as

the programme was free of charge, but places were limited.

Derry Canty, mayor of Cork county, said that when he was made redundant, he had to start again, but the opportunity did come along to start his own business. This was a great opportunity for young and not so young, as everyone, he said, had to work these days.

Green Shoots is an incubation programme, where ten successful businesses will receive training, mentoring, space and facilities at Macroom E and is supported by Cork County Council, Enterprise Ireland, the South Cork Enterprise Board, Macroom Town Council the Lee Valley Enterprise Board and Macroom E. Anyone with an idea was invited to come forward.