



8th April 2019

Re: National Broadband Plan

Dear CEO,

On behalf of the Members and Board of Irish Rural Link, I am writing to you in relation to the status of the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and the need for the tendering process to be expedited and a favourable decision to be made urgently. In recent weeks, we have been concerned that this process may be terminated without a favourable result.

As you may be aware, Irish Rural Link (IRL) represent over 600 groups with a combined membership of over 25,000. We have a proven track record of working with communities who are committed to ensuring that they have a sustainable future as well as access to essential services.

IRL has highlighted for many years the impact the lack of broadband to rural areas is having on rural development and the creation of jobs. The importance of high speed broadband to these areas cannot be emphasised enough. IRL is an enthusiastic supporter of Project Ireland 2040 which was launched over a year ago. We also support the fact that the three Regional Assemblies are in the process of finalising their Spatial and Economic Strategies - all of which place high speed broadband as a key component in the overall delivery of the Project/Strategies.

Not to go ahead with the NBP cannot and should not be an option when the expected decision on the Plan's future is to be made before Easter.

We are fully aware that as County CEO, you understand the implications on investment and growth in rural areas and the huge need for broadband in ensuring that Project 2040 is successful. We are therefore asking that the full implementation of the National Broadband Plan is included in this month's correspondence for elected members.

While alternatives, such as 4G and 5G are often suggested, we strongly believe they cannot be substitutes given they are not future proofed and are unlikely to be technically available to many rural areas.

The whole NBP process has faced many setbacks again and again since it was first announced. We are asking that this Government deliver on its promise and push ahead with the provision of Fibre broadband to every home and business in the country and do so as a matter of urgency.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seamus Boland'.

Seamus Boland
CEO Irish Rural Link
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