

EPMG Priority Actions 2010: Report, November 2010

Economic Programme Management Group Members

Members:

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Aim: Increase the competitiveness of South Tipperary for Investment and income generation

Key Action	Target/Standard/Process	Partners	KPI	Progress in year 2010
<p><i>Infrastructure:</i> The EPMG will continue to maintain a watching brief on vital infrastructure development, inputting where it can to ensure the county progresses with infrastructure development.</p>	<p>Broadband Increased accessibility, availability.</p>	<p>STCC SERA Private Enterprise DCENR ENet</p>	<p>Carrick-on Suir, Tipperary Town/Limerick Junction, Cashel and Cahir broadband infrastructure ‘Lit’.</p> <p>Increasing the usage of the MANS</p> <p>Rural Broadband penetration expanded through Department’s ‘3’ licence.</p>	<p>Broadband MANS Phase 1 In Clonmel there are 16 direct connections (compared to 8 at the start of 2009) to the MAN (14 end users, 2 of which have two connections for resilience.) with 6 carriers are servicing the area (5 early in 2010) – Smart / BT / Cable & Wireless / Digiweb and UPC. In the case of Digiweb and UPC, there would be multiple end customers benefiting from MAN connectivity, highlighting the fact that the MANS are a middle mile solution allowing multiple last mile or access technologies to complement and work in tandem with them. PH and AF are to discuss connections to the MANS with Enet (ref: business parks)</p> <p>Phase 2 Cahir, Cashel, Carrick on Suir and Tipperary Town were handed over to e net in mid Dec. All of these, except Cashel, have BT backhaul and are available for traffic Enet and other significant stakeholders are trying to overcome the backhaul challenge from Cashel. To date, the following have shown some interest in MAN connectivity (Alza – Cashel, Dep. Of Justice / Pall – Tipperary Town). A meeting took place last week between enet reps and business interests following a presentation to the town council</p> <p>Rural Broadband project is being delivered by “3” and is nearing completion. Twenty-seven EDs in South Tipperary have been completed. There are almost 11,000 addresses to be covered in Co. Tipperary (N+S) (see details at end). There are hints of another national broadband scheme to follow the current one, but not immediately.</p> <p>Eircom continues to enable exchanges with Golden, Ballingarry and Clerihan being done in 2010. There are also six exchanges which will not be enabled of whom three might be partly or totally covered by the NBS (details at end). This would indicate</p>

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	Business Parks Consolidation of recent development. Strategic planning and development of landbanks.	STCC TI IDA EI CEB Private business	Ballingarrane Marketing campaign continued. Campus Innovation Centre progressed R&D centre grown Private business parks continue development when opportunities arise.	that there may be gaps remaining after the NBS and Eircom programmes as well as incomplete coverage in areas covered. For further information see report at end this document A new brochure has been prepared and was launched in July along with a website. A video is currently being prepared, following collection of new images The Incubation Unit for Tipperary Institute at Ballingarrane is being actively followed up with recent meetings. The R&D Centre in Ballingarrane continues to be active with one researcher moved in. Anthony FitzGerald has been in the position of Business Development Executive since the beginning of September 2009. This year he has been working on the launch of the website/Ballingarrane brochure, support of the business parks, training opportunities, inter-agency work and creating greater levels of interaction between the business community and the various state agencies.
	Hotels	Private enterprise	Promote the sustainability of hotels where possible.	Due to the economic climate, there has been little opportunity to progress this initiative. Hotels are coming under severe pressure and it may be that the main effort should be to support them in terms of encouraging events etc.
	Rail Upgrade Limerick Junction Rail Station	Iarnród Éireann SERA CDB MWRA	Park and Ride facility, developed. Passenger facilities and services on the Waterford/Limerick rail line improved. Commencement of a joint strategic rail initiative between the SE Region and the Mid West Region on the Limerick – Waterford - Rosslare route.	The Car park, a fine development, had been completed. Services on the Waterford Limerick Line were reduced in service from December 2009 but STCC successfully met with IE to minimise this impact to one service (return) per day being affected. Meetings with IE have taken place to plan a joint marketing campaign to support the line by increasing passenger numbers. The Regional Authority representing the local authorities in the South-East commissioned a report on the line for the National Transport Authority. This was unfortunately unsuccessful and the Waterford-Rosslare Harbour segment has been closed (see report to SPC at end this document).
	Roads	SERA STCC CDB	Inclusion of the Tipperary Town and Carrick on Suir by-passes in the NRA programme pre 2013	N 24: The Tipperary town-bypass/Pallas Green to Cahir : funding has been received to undertake an Environmental Impact Statement and CPO documentation for the final planning phases by end 2011 so that it can then go to An Bord Pleanála. The Carrick by pass and roadway to/from it: funding is available for the route selection design. Construction funding for either part has not yet been allocated.

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	<i>Childcare infrastructure</i>	STCCC	Strategic Mapping/Zeno Updated Quality Programmes Promoted Childcare Services with CCSS supported Voluntary Notification supported HSE & County Council Child protection workshops supported Childcare providers supported in creating easier access to their services for Traveller children.	<p>We currently have 74 Services in the county. This breaks down into 33 Community, 38 Private and 3 stand-alone after-schools. There hasn't been a capital fund for new infrastructure since 2008 and this will continue until at least 2012.</p> <p>However, we are currently pursuing the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs for urgent immediate funding to help relieve the unacceptable situation, which has developed in Fethard Community Childcare. We probably won't have feedback on this until January</p>
Engineering Sector	<i>Engineering Sector Action</i>	TI FÁS CEB EI STCC Engineering companies	Workshop on European R&D funding held Training & Development Association promoted Action plan developed and implemented	<p>The Engineering Network has now met four times, with the last meeting being an information/training night re grants etc. The network continues to be facilitated by Breda Kenny of TI and financially supported by FAS. A number of other actions are being planned by and for the Network and a programme has been set up.</p> <p>As of the end of February 2010, Introductory meeting and 3 meetings held. Programme in place to June 2010. November 2010 A two day workshop on tendering took place in July. Breda Kenny now on maternity leave. Future of the network needs to be considered as it was intended to be a six month process only initially. Good networking by small group of members so far.</p>
Energy	<i>Energy Action</i>	STCC Private enterprise	Creation and implementation of action plan	We are still awaiting a reply re the Gussing application to a joint Oireachtas committee. In the meanwhile PH has been consulting a number of agencies/bodies and a list of actions has been agreed. TEA are also working on a list of actions

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		ESB DCENR	Identify approaches that eliminate problems associated with delays in connections to the grid. Wind energy and biogas projects in the pipeline implemented	An information meeting re renewable wood resources took place in May with good attendance and interest, organised by Teagasc, assisted by the CDB. Arising out of this an idea re group heating in Tipperary town was pursued and is now in its second version, based on gas rather than wood renewables. A committee is also meeting in Clonmel regarding an application to a Smart Energy City competition. Gas is now being brought to Cahir which might see the development of the gas-fired generation plant there.
Support the implementation of the Slieve Ardagh Business Plan	The EPMG will continue to support the activities of the Slieveardagh group with inter-agency support towards the implementation of their action plan.	SRD, VEC HSE, STDC TI, FAS CCC, CEB C.I.T.E. MFRC Tipperary Volunteering services STCC	Implement the contents of the Business Plan as agreed	Key areas that continued to be progressed in 2010 – the development of the lake as a fishing resource is being continued, literary events were held, usage of the IT facilities in the Library in Killenaule has increased. A calendar was produced. Research work on the O Tunney school is continuing. The Development officer continued to work for the area but for a shorter number of hours per week. A plan has now been submitted to the County Development Company for funding and is being considered for support and development.
Support the implementation of the Carrick on Suir Tourism and Economic Development Committee (COSTEDC) plan	Implement Tourism and economic actions identified in annual plans.	COSTEDC CDB OPW Blarney Woollen Mills/Dove Hill STDC FÁS STCC	Implementation of Action plan priorities River walk progressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New look 2011 county Tipperary holiday guide book being produced • Six trade shows attended • Walking strategy being implemented • Butler Trail being implemented • Knockmealdown recreational strategy in progress • Discussions taking place regarding the development of tow path (buy in required from a number of individuals and agencies to make this work) • Workshop held for product providers (i.e. the trade) • Tourism Development International contracted to deliver the walking strategy and Butler trail initiative • Approx 11,000 euro secured from South Tipperary Development company for Marketing initiatives for 2010 • Supported the Rural Recreation Officer in organising the National Trails Day in South Tipperary – walks were

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				<p>organised in 6 venues throughout the county with in excess of 250 out walking</p> <p>Issue re ownership of small portion of land on tow path still not resolved but options are being considered.</p>
Aim 2: Provide a Skilled Workforce for Current and Future Jobs				
Implement actions arising from ‘Skills and Training Analysis in South Tipperary’	<p>Focus of this CDB action area has changed dramatically in the last year due to economic downturn. The focus has moved from services to business and upskilling employees to now providing for unemployed people.</p> <p>A coordinated approach is required between Tipperary Institute, FÁS, VEC and other agencies such as TEA (Tipperary Energy Agency) as new solutions and programmes are developed and rolled out to those being made unemployed in the county.</p>	<p>FÁS TI VEC STDC STCC EI</p> <p>FÁS/Carrick Employers' Group</p>	<p>Meeting of the relevant key CDB agencies, facilitated by Regional Manager, FÁS to identify a coordinated approach to new scenario of unemployment in South Tipperary. (This should also link into a regional approach that would be the remit of some agencies). Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs analysis • What the agencies can provide • How the agencies can work together • Pooling data <p>Carrick on Suir Employers Network/Training investigated and progressed</p>	<p>AF to report on 2010 initiatives</p> <p>PH has been working with the VEC re the Labour Force Activation Fund to which the VEC and presumably other training bodies applied for funding. Unfortunately however no one in the county, with the exception of Tipperary Institute was successful. Some broad feedback was received to the effect that successful projects were those which stressed innovation, new skills or new people, or those that looked at gaps in the market and new markets. There was some concern that suppliers chosen in some cases then turned to unsuccessful VEC applicants for the actual training. We failed to get more detailed feedback. PH also assisted Tipperary Institute in the identification of prospective clients for their programmes from South Tipperary unemployed pool, specifically for coaching programme.</p>
Aim 3: Increase the Economic performance of Targeted Sectors and Grow Entrepreneurship				

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<p>In the development of a Rural Development Plan /Cohesion plan(s) for the county ensure that the economic component will have a strong emphasis on developing a strategic plan and accessing resources for <i>rural development in Tourism and Food</i></p>	<p><i>Tourism</i></p> <p>County Tourism Structure in place</p> <p>2009 Tourism actions implemented re: Marketing Product Development Training</p>	<p>ST Tourism Company STDC STCC Tourism Trade providers Fáilte Ireland Teagasc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of 'Butler Trail' • Develop and implement a strategy for Internet/website/ on-line booking/visitor surveys • Promotion at Trade shows in Ireland, the UK Germany, Netherlands • Investigate potential initiatives <p>Irish Music Tipperary association with the horse Linking Rock of Cashel with Cashel town</p> <p>Revamp the Tipperary 2011 Holiday Guidebook</p>	<p>Priorities for 2010</p> <p>See report above</p>

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	<p>Food</p> <p>Develop a Food Network incorporating the artisan/ organic/ high quality commercial food sectors.</p> <p>Identify programme of work/county food & drink plan</p>	<p>STDC STCC Food Network CEB Tipperary Tourism Co Fáilte Ireland TEAGASC EI IDA</p>	<p>Set up interagency meeting led by TI to include, STDC, TEAGASC, CEB, FÁS and Trade.</p> <p>Progress the 'long-table' concept of promoting South Tipperary Food.</p> <p>Action plan developed.</p> <p>Link made with tourism actions for marketing purposes in place.</p> <p>Potential of R&D Development Association considered.</p>	<p>The Tipperary Food Producers Network is a developing food network established in August 2008 by food producers to collectively further the food agenda in Tipperary and to drive their individual business performance through shared learning and development. The Network has identified a total of 66 food producers throughout Tipperary, 28 of these producers are members of the Network. The current chairperson of the network is Mr. Pat Whelan. Since its inception the Network has taken on initiatives that have raised the profile of food within the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The food network has continued to develop strongly. The Long Table events were held successfully. The network has also been involved in the connect programme, jointly funded by north and South Tipperary county councils, in the secondary schools. It may now be time to consider the membership criteria for the network. The network made a very important and successful contribution to the Council business event in July where the county business website, Ballingarrane brochure were launched. • Contacts with Bord Bia continue
Prepare an action plan arising from the study	Equine Tourism	TEAGASC CEB	Equine tourism 'bundle'	No significant development on the equine front to date. There is still some opportunity to develop a tourism product based around Coolmore/Cashel and

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Undertake a County Innovation and Enterprise Strategy	Innovation and enterprise Strategy adopted		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low rate of high potential start-ups • Increase in start ups of Technology enterprises 	regard to funding for community projects such as playgrounds
Hold Enterprise Skills Workshops for 'Technology' sector	Hold workshop and work with other agencies to ensure a good turn-out attendance.			

EPMG:

The **proposed 2010 work programme** to centre on the following areas but with the facility to discuss other topics including urgent items.

- Broadband: monitor and encourage greater access to better broadband services countywide
- Support and develop business parks and their tenants throughout the county
 - Create opportunities through linkages and sub supply for smaller businesses
 - Develop networks where this would add value from an upskilling perspective, market perspective and information perspective
- Railways: Continue to monitor services and work with IR and the community to better market services and develop commuter services
- Roadways: press for continued progress on Tipperary and Carrick-on-Suir by passes
- Childcare: continue support for childcare programme and for its development
- Engineering and Food networks: continued support for their development and action plans
- Slieve Ardagh group: Work to support the group through a change in emphasis and tactics and so continue the development of the area
- Tourism: continue the actions as outlined in action plan above.

- Continue support and encourage the roll out of entrepreneurial activities including local events in Spirit of Enterprise week and
- Draw up an implementation programme arising from the Interagency innovation and Enterprise Strategy and implement accordingly
- Renewable Energy Initiative: Continue to seek and develop job and other opportunities from this area

Broadband in the County, Report, Autumn 2010

This is a periodic report on the state of broadband provision in South Tipperary.

The situation regarding broadband provision in the county is progressing towards a better availability of the service but there are still outstanding difficulties in a number of areas.

Broadband access to the internet is the modern equivalent of rural electrification in the 1940's-1960's. With it the citizen has full access to all aspects of the modern world, for good or bad, without it the citizen is in effect disenfranchised, discriminated against and isolated. Good broadband access is critical; for example, to the future economic development of the county as industry and services develop.

There are several different and fast evolving ways to provide broadband. They differ in the physical method of getting the signal to the citizen and the cost of doing so. The signal can come by fibre optic cable where it moves very fast as light down a glass wire or more slowly down a copper wire. These cables can be phone wires on poles or much more expensively, routed along dug trenches. The signal can be broadcast over a town from a transmitter, or received from a satellite signal, both with a capital set up cost.

2 Broadband in towns:

Towns are, in effect, a concentrated market of consumers gathered in one place. They are both a need and an opportunity. Given the concentration of consumers, and the need to support economic development into the long term, they require a long term investment in high grade internet access. Without it, towns would fall further and further behind. This is why the local authorities in the county invested in the MANS project.

An underground fibre optic cable ring or MANs (metropolitan area network) has been installed in Clonmel, Cahir, Carrick-on-Suir, Cashel and Tipperary. National Government covered 90% of the cost. The local authorities covered the remaining 10% and the scheme was co-ordinated by SERA. The connections to the Clonmel MANS have been growing slowly but steadily since 2005 with the number of end users growing more rapidly, each connection bringing many users.

In Clonmel there are now 16 direct connections to the MANS¹, with 6 carriers servicing the area (BT, Chorus, Digiweb, Smart Telecom, Verizon and Cable and Wireless). Chorus/UPC have connected to the MANs network in Clonmel which has allowed them to upgrade their digital services in that area, potentially serving upwards of 2000 customers from their connection. There are a number of businesses supported directly in Clonmel including Boston Scientific, Kentz and Abbott Vascular. The local authorities connected to the Clonmel MANS during 2008.

WiMax, a broadband broadcasting system linked back to fibre optic cable was recently launched in the news media. This system will probably be first offered in towns where it will compete against other providers. It will apparently offer a five kilometre broadcasting radius from a base station. It has been called a 'bigger brother to Wi-Fi', the technology that offers wireless broadband in public spaces such as cafés. It is likely that WiMax will join the other carriers servicing town areas.

E-net is the company responsible for managing and activating the MANS in Clonmel, Cahir, Carrick-on-Suir, Cashel and Tipperary. All of these, except Cashel, have BT backhaul (connection back to the mainstream internet, see <http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/Communications/Communications+Development/Next+Generation+Broadband/Next+Generation+broadband.htm>) and so are available for traffic. However E-Net has not received a large number of enquiries for connections in any of these towns. As E-net are in effect a wholesaler only, they will require a company interested in using the MANS in each town to activate it. E-net cannot sell the MANS direct to the customer, the service providers do this. Business and other groups in the towns might canvass internet needs so as to be able to show the commercial demand for a service from service providers.

Conal Henry, CEO of E/Net recently wrote:

One thing that has really surprised me is the huge difference in understanding and expectations key stakeholders have about the project. A number believe that the MANs are not being utilised and are a waste of money, and are in effect a "White Elephant". Another group see the MANs as a telecoms magic bullet that will solve all local broadband issues, the "Great White Hope"-. So what's the truth? In reality, neither position is true. The MANs are categorically not a waste of money but nor will they answer all the broadband requirements in any MAN town.

Let me explain. I strongly disagree with the stance that the MANs are "White Elephants". e/net have been managing the network for over 5 years and in that time it's obvious that the existence of a MAN has a major impact on boosting the range, quality and importantly the value of communications

¹ There were eight two years ago.

solutions in the area being served. Also and significantly, the MANs have also removed a major barrier to foreign direct investment in MAN enabled towns – 70% of all IDA jobs created in 2008 were in MAN-enabled towns.

On the other hand, the MANs were never conceived as channels to deliver ubiquitous broadband. The MAN infrastructure is a classic middle-mile infrastructure, providing a very high-quality link between Ireland's national telecoms network and the range of last-mile or access technologies such as mobile broadband, WiMax or LLU. This again is borne out by the reality of the situation. We now have 35 telco's trading with us and accommodate a wide range of operating models and access technologies, each working successfully in tandem with the MANs.

Cashel has a particular problem in that, to date, the MANS there is not yet connected back to the mainline broadband system (the backhaul). A number of possibilities are being followed up by E-net and other players at present.

There is no doubt but that bridging the 'final mile' between the MANs and the consumer is the major issue at present for Cahir, Carrick-on-Suir and Tipperary. New methods and companies are constantly competing to solve this issue in the cheapest/fastest way. Current possibilities include bringing the fibre optic through the sewers thus avoiding expensive roadworks.

Conclusions re MANS

1. The MANS are a vital long term infrastructural asset
2. While other broadband services may provide access, the MANS will be crucial in providing very high quality services.
3. The MANS will be used as soon as
 - a. there is a major customer or facility that needs a very high speed service or
 - b. connection/civil work costs significantly reduce for smaller customers
4. Once either these happen, then usage and retailers will grow slowly but steadily.
5. The fact that they are in public ownership and open to all users will be vital. They increase competition, efficiency, choice, and reduce road openings/works
6. South Tipperary is in a very strong position in having its towns provided with MANS. This will help in attracting/retaining high quality employment opportunities

Developments in Fibre Optic Cabling.

Eircom has recently announced a €20 pilot project in providing fibre optic cable to the home (FTTH) in Sandyford, Dublin and Wexford town. They will be bringing fibre optic cable from the exchange, (possibly via pre-existing ducting) all the way to the home. The final leg of the journey may be above ground or below ground depending on what is in place already. There will be no copper involved. While technical details have, apparently, yet to be worked out, there are clearly important implications. If fibre optic cable can be brought direct to the home, securely and cheaply, then high speed

broadband will be more easily available to the business and home consumer. However it is important to note that this is a pilot programme with many practical details to be worked out.

An recent interview with Paul Donovan CEO of Eircom noted 'the key stumbling block is the large investment in fibre that needs to be made. "What every CEO of every telco in Europe, particularly incumbents, is trying to figure out is exactly what is the business model that can justify such a large and incremental investment. Eircom has often been criticised for not leading the way in terms of fibre investment but if there was a business case there would be people queuing up and saying 'forget Eircom we'll do it ourselves'.

"The old world of copper and 3G will shortly be coming to an end and to generate sufficient funds to invest in fibre and LTE-based networks into the future, we need a new formula for doing business in this country. "Collaboration between the networks is the way to go. The challenge is to crack that nut."

The FTTH market in Europe is growing rapidly but Ireland but Ireland is really only starting out on this part of the broadband journey. Scandinavian countries are the leaders, having started in the late 1990's. A major issue will be who owns/uses these FTTH networks, depending on who installs them. As noted above new methods of getting fibre to the home are being tried out including bringing fibre through the sewers. There are also changes to the way in which fibre optic works. A group of ex-UCD researchers, has developed a technology that can enable a single strand of fibre to move from carrying one signal from one operator to carrying data from 80 telecoms and TV companies all at once. This Exemplar Network heralds an era of virtualisation of fibre networks, using colour coding to enable multiple fibre providers to serve businesses and homes, often on a single strand of fibre. .

In June Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Eamon Ryan TD committed a further €5m to the next two phases of the Exemplar Network which will see the Exemplar Network grow from circling Dublin in the second phase to being a nationwide entity by the third phase in 2013.

Ryan said the first phase of the Exemplar Network, in which the State invested €10m with Intune Networks, has already created 140 jobs and that by the time of the third phase thousands of jobs, from digital media to high-end computing, green tech and life sciences, could be created as organisations will be attracted by the speed and capability of the network.

The first phase of the Exemplar Network, the Exemplar Testbed, located at Intune's headquarters in Park West in Dublin, has a capacity of 2.5 terabytes – remarkable when you consider that this is twice the volume of traffic that the current London phone system carries. The second phase of the Exemplar Network, which kicks off in 2011, will consist of an active test ring around the Dublin metropolitan area. The final layer of the network, Phase 3, will kick off in 2013 and will be complete by 2020.

Broadband in Rural Areas.

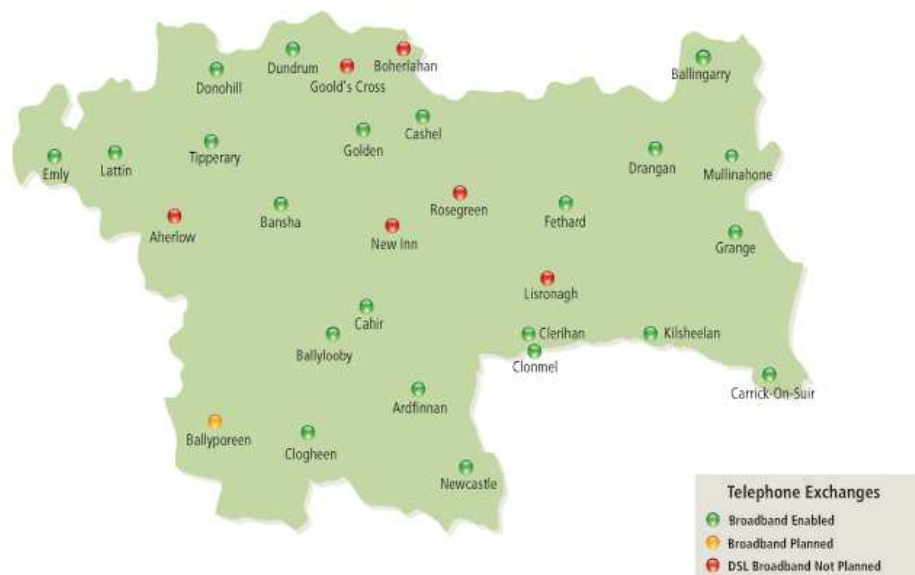
Because there are areas of the countryside which are not being covered by the existing services the Government appointed the company “3” to implement the National Broadband Scheme. This project is intended to bring broadband to rural areas, which have no services at present. The company estimates that they will be serving, directly or through retailers, 10,000 customers in the county with full broadband access by Autumn 2010. The service is mostly provided by rebroadcasting signal from fibre optic networks with a small percentage being supplied by satellite. Some companies may chose to rebroadcast the “3” signal, acting as retailers to the public.

The total value of the investment required to implement the National Broadband Scheme is c.€223m, of which the Government is contributing €79.8m. The scheme is co-funded by the EU under the European Regional Development Fund 2007-2013. A substantial part of South Tipperary EDs have or are to be covered (see map at end).

However there may still be areas that will not be covered adequately by either the existing Eircom service or the new “3” National Broadband Scheme. The definition of an ED with an adequate cover, (i. e. one which will not be covered by the new National Broadband Scheme) is cover for at least 60% of buildings. It is possible that there may not be complete cover in areas which are regarded as covered for the NBS. Bانشa appears to be a case in point. “3” have offered to look at such areas if a special case is made by a Councillor to them. If you are aware of other areas, they should be brought to the attention of the Council who will inform “3” accordingly. I understand the next phase of development by the Dept. will be a scheme to assist those who cannot receive broadband in areas outside the NBS Scheme.

Meanwhile **Eircom** continues to broadband enable their exchanges with Ballingarry enabled in June and Ballyclerihan in July (though Ballyporeen is delayed until 2011. This then allows an internet service over phone lines though subscribers who are too far from their exchange may not be serviceable. Eircom have also increased the speed of their service from certain exchanges in major urban areas in the NGB initiative. It appears that Eircom will continue to improve their service over phone lines, in the areas close to their exchanges.

Tipperary South



In addition to the services above there are also a number of suppliers providing broadband via satellite. Eircom offers a satellite broadband service. In theory this is available to everyone, as long as there is line of sight from the location. Traditionally, satellite is a more expensive method of delivery as customers must buy equipment and there are high set up charges. However, Eircom is currently reviewing this service and hopes to offer a much more competitive product in early autumn of this year. Others are re-broadcasting broadband from council installations. This is as a result of an initiative undertaken by the last SPC (Economic) where the Council agreed to allow its structures in rural areas to be licenced to accommodate broadband infrastructure. To date we have 4 licences operating on 4 sites, at Rosegreen, Rossadrehid, Cashel and Lisnagaul.

Mobile Broadband

Broadband is increasingly available over mobile networks. Eircom mobile broadband, for example, covers Dublin County, Cork City, Dundalk, Drogheda, Navan, Naas, Waterford, Bray and Newbridge. It is planned that coverage will extend to 53% of the population by December 2009.

Meanwhile a recent trial by Ericsson saw them delivering high definition video television and video conferencing to laptops in the back of a Dublin taxi. LTE is a fourth generation technology which will be deployed to replace existing 3G networks. Equipment makers like Ericsson are hoping standards will converge on LTE. They are also hoping it will become the single wireless network that will deliver digital radio, TV and broadband in one – thus justifying the expense that operators will have to commit to. Each mobile operator will have different coverage.

Now:

Comreg, Ireland's telecommunications regulator, has just published its quarterly report. The report states that Ireland's broadband take-up has grown by 12% and that the nation's broadband penetration is 22.9%.

Acknowledging this, the Minister said: "Competition is working for us, as can be seen from the statistics published by Comreg yesterday showing we have passed two broadband milestones. We now have one million broadband subscribers and for the first time we have surpassed the OECD average on broadband penetration."

The National Development Council's publication 'Annual Competitiveness Report 2010' notes that

- Ireland's investment in IT is equal to the euro area average but below leading countries such as the US and Japan
- Ireland fits into the general euro area picture of the majority of broadband connections having speeds of between 2-10 mb/s. However Ireland has a much lower percentage of higher speed connections than leading EU countries such as Portugal, Belgium and Denmark
- Fibre connections locally are growing fast in several countries but Ireland is well behind.
- In terms of on line availability to 20 basic services, Ireland's position has improved significantly since 2006

In Five Years?

While a plethora of service providers may be confusing to the consumer now, time and service qualities (price, service and product speed) will eventually settle down to a few main retailers and this may provide the market with a clearer picture and perhaps a better choice for consumers.

Where we may be in five years (and the picture is changing all the time as technology develops):

1. The nature of personal computers will probably have come to a stage where you could have a multi-functional device (phone, GPS, camera, MP3 player, audio recorder, business needs (word processing/spreadsheets, presentations etc), video player, internet access, social networking access etc) within one portable 'thing'. Internet access will therefore be a matter of continuous access, if at different speeds, in different places.
2. Programmes and data may also move to be stored away from your device (cloud computing) and this will need greater speeds to get the programmes and data back to you when you want them. Education, entertainment etc will all increasingly be provided over the internet.
3. Higher and higher access speeds will be demanded by consumers as more and more video and other images are accessed through the Internet, rather than television for example.

4. The MANS will be used by major players such as companies needing very high speed internet access or companies supplying internet, phone etc services to a large number of subscribers
5. Internet services will be beginning to be generally available on a similar basis to the phone infrastructure (if the Eircom FTTH pilot is a success) to individual homes and businesses or via companies retailing the MANS.
6. In rural areas, and generally, internet services will be available on a wireless basis as per the 3 NBS scheme and on satellite for high speed users
7. Internet services will also be available to mobile phones and other devices
8. As there is both a demand and access, various services will migrate to internet/broadband use, but this will vary. It is very hard to predict how and where this will happen but it will and possibly by ways that do not seem possible now.
9. Competition and innovation in the market is vital and will result in both losses and gains along the way but with a better internet service as the end goal.

Report to Strategic Policy Committee for Physical and Economic Planning and Development, September, 2010.

The Waterford-Limerick City railway line (Southern Rail Corridor)

1. This is a strategically important service linking a port, Rosslare and a major city, Limerick, with several major settlements between them or linked onwards such as Shannon, Ennis and Galway. The route links many of the parts of the Atlantic Gateway identified in the National Spatial Strategy.
2. The current rail service network owes much to the 19th century with several small stations being served by a line with mechanical signalling and many manned road crossings. In some places the rail line parallels a major roadway where buses provide similar services.
3. Following the collapse of the Cahir Viaduct a reported €3m was spent on its repair. Since then newer rail carriages etc were transferred to the line.
4. Recent government policy documents (*Smarter Travel-A Sustainable Transport Future, Dept of Transport*) stress moving people from road transport to alternative options such as public transport.
5. The Council views the rail link as a strategic asset for the county and for the region.

6. The need for improvements to this transport corridor has been acknowledged in a range of national, regional and local policy documents. These include:
 - *National Spatial Strategy*;
 - *Transport 21*;
 - *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future*;
 - *National Development Plan 2007-2013*;
 - *Atlantic Gateways Initiative*;
 - *Regional Planning Guidelines*;
 - *City/County Development Plans*.
7. The line was previously served by four services up and down six days a week.
8. As a result of cutbacks, one of the four services was discontinued in the programme published before Christmas 2009
9. These trains are not well supported in general. Some people do go to the Dublin/Cork line using it. Some services are cheap but local commuting on average is reportedly more expensive than the bus services.
10. The timetables do not seem to be set up for local commuting to work: There is, for example, no commuter service into Waterford city in the morning in time for people to go to work or college there for example. The result is queues of cars at Grannagh each morning. The situation is the same for those travelling to Clonmel in the morning. There is a 'viable but as yet untapped commuter customer base'.
11. There is a general perception that the Waterford-Limerick Junction line is not being well marketed.
12. A direct connection from Limerick to Galway is now open with good commuter numbers from places like Gort. This opens up the possibility of travelling from the South-East to the West direct, with a change at Limerick or Limerick Junction.
13. Freight services on the line appear to be in decline with much traffic going on the road. It may be that this trend will continue until there is a financial disincentive to road freight.
14. Recently IE again announced that it wished to reduce services on the line, specifically to close the Rosslare –Waterford city Link. This decision had to be approved by the National Transport Authority.
15. The Regional Authority, representing the local authorities in the South-East commissioned a report examining the Socio-Economic & Business Case for the Rosslare-Waterford-Limerick Rail Corridor. SERA's *Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region (20041)* look at the need to achieve a necessary critical mass and sustainable densities in terms of settlement within the Region. An effective and efficient rail service is crucial to that critical mass.
16. The key recommendations of the business case were that services should be increased on the Wexford-Waterford rail line, that Wexford Town should be connected directly to the rail line and the promotion of the rail line should be carried out through a Community Rail Partnership(CRP). This report was presented to the NTA.
17. Unfortunately however the National Transport Authority has recently approved the Irish Rail proposal to suspend the Rosslare-Waterford rail service (see Appendix at end)

Conclusions:

- The long term sustainable future for this line is to be a fast, efficient and affordable rail service. This is key to achieving growth in the regions and to promoting commuter journeys between the employment centres. The smaller locations would have to be serviced by buses from the railway stations
- The services connecting to main line services to allow people to get to Dublin/Cork early in the day are important and need to be protected but proper commuter-focused local services are more important locally and probably economically.
- There is a need to market the service better.
- The line is likely to continue to be under threat so long as IE is under financial pressure, in an economic recession, and passenger numbers are low.
- If there is no commitment at present to upgrading the line, reducing costs and providing effective cheap local commuter services, then perhaps the best we can hope for is to retain links with the main line services and keep the line open for future development, maintaining the pressure for effective local services, a customer-suitable timetable and a focused marketing campaign.

Actions: current and future

1. Community and Enterprise section is attempting to support the railway line.
2. I have had several meetings with Myles McHugh, Service Planning Manager, Intercity and Commuter Network, and we have agreed to work together on a marketing campaign to try to bring up user numbers
 - a. IE are currently designing marketing literature (timetable, poster, leaflet) having provided a sample for comments (I would like to thank the business groups in the county for their comments/assistance)
 - b. We are examining ways of distributing this material
 - c. The business groups in the towns along the route have generously offered to assist the marketing campaign and it is clear that there is a good deal of goodwill towards the service.
3. We have also discussed the use of blank poster sites outside the stations to advertise the rail service
4. I undertook an email consultation exercise on the rail service and have provided the results to both the SERA consultant study and directly to IE. The results stressed the need to market the service and to provide commuter appropriate services. I am happy to report that this exercise created significant discussion within IE and commuter appropriate services are being discussed though their introduction may be delayed until we come out of recession.
5. The concept of a Community Rail Partnership will continue to be investigated but it is clear that a fundamental contract between IE and a CRP would be critical to the latter's success including input into programming, destinations and journey costs.

Pat Holland
AOCE, 08/09/10

Appendix 1 (press release from NTA website)

- National Transport Authority approves Irish Rail proposal to suspend Rosslare-Waterford rail service
- An enhanced bus service to be implemented in the area
- Over 80 additional bus round-trips per week will deliver significant transport improvements along the route

The National Transport Authority has approved proposals by Irish Rail to suspend its passenger rail service on the Rosslare to Waterford line in favour of a replacement bus service which will meet transport demand in the area. This approval, however, is subject to a number of significant conditions.

The current rail service is not viable with an annual operating cost of €1.9 million and fewer than 50 passengers using the service each way (just 20% of actual maximum capacity). Fare income amounts to c€50,000 each year.

A network of replacement bus services will provide a significantly enhanced public transport option for people living, working and travelling in the area – at a considerably reduced cost to the state. Over 80 additional round trips will be provided, from stops previously served by rail, supported by funding from the National Transport Authority of approximately €250,000 a year. Fares on these new bus services are being maintained at the same levels for the displaced rail passengers. Irish Rail will be contractually obliged to ensure that the rail line is maintained in place to enable a re-instatement of services if transport demand and economic circumstances should improve sufficiently in the future. An asset management regime has to be implemented by Irish Rail and will be audited by the National Transport Authority.

See <http://www.nationaltransport.ie/news.html> for further details including:

- The full text of the National Transport Authority's evaluation of this matter
- A copy of the submissions received from:
 - o Irish Rail
 - o South East Regional Authority
 - Irish Rail's Asset management plan for the line

Excerpts from Irish Times article arising from the above.

Iarnród Éireann said it would work with Bus Éireann to establish replacement bus schedules and would confirm the date on which services would be suspended. "It is expected that this transition will be completed during the month of September 2010," a spokesman said.

However, campaign group Rail Users Ireland said it regretted the closure and maintained that a bus replacement service provided by Bus Éireann "will take significantly longer than the train" and will not serve all stations on the route, particularly Ballycullane. "Further, Bus Éireann has proposed to withdraw certain local bus services in south Wexford in order to provide the buses and staff required to provide the rail replacement service," it said.

The group criticised Iarnród Éireann's business case for the closure and said it and Wexford-based Save the Rail Group had already met one rail company interested in taking over the running of the Rosslare to Waterford line. The group said it looked forward to meeting other interested parties in the weeks ahead. Rail Users Ireland thanked the South Eastern Regional Authority, which funded a study strongly supporting the retention and expansion of services between Waterford, Rosslare and Wexford.

Save the Rail Group welcomed the transport authority's instruction to Iarnród Éireann to maintain the track and claimed others were interested in running trains on it.