Irish Rural Link
13th June 2017

**Irish Rural Link running two Free Basic Computer Training Programmes – ‘Getting Citizens Online’ and ‘IT Skills for Farmers’**

Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities are currently running two Computer Training Programmes; one for people who have never used a computer before and the second for farmers, also who never have used a computer, to get them online in advance of payments moving online from 2018.

With the closure of banks and post offices in many smaller towns and villages and with the move towards banking, paying bills and public services online, there is an increasing need for more people to get online.

‘Getting Citizens online’ has been running since January 2017, with more than 700 people trained to date. ‘Getting Citizens Online’ replaces and builds on BenefIT training scheme which Irish Rural Link delivered to over 4,500 participants around the country and to the islands for all different age groups. For older people, and others living in rural areas, the classes not only teach them how to bank and pay bills online but are often a social outlet while also helping them to stay in touch with family and friends who may be living abroad or other parts of the country through Skype and email.

In May of this year, IRL launched the computer training programme for farmers – ‘IT Skills for Farmers’. With payments from the Department of Agriculture to farmers going online from next year and warnings from the Department that farmers will risk losing payments if applications for schemes and payments are not made online, this programme could not come at a better time.

The overall aim of the programme is to get farmers online in advance of these new regulations coming in. The programme is designed to provide Farmers who have never used the internet with the confidence, motivation and skills to reap the benefits of participating in today's digital world. It will cover topics such as; Farmer Registration, Calf & Herd Registration, Computer Literacy, Internet Search, Setting up Email & Online Banking.

Both computer programmes are provided by fully qualified Computer Tutors and take place over a 5 week period with one 2 hour classes per week. Under the Grant Scheme, people and farmers who have never used the Internet will be provided with 10 hours of classroom training, free of charge.  To book a place on either programme, contact Mary on 090 6482744

Both programmes are funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment.

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For further information, please contact (anytime):
Seamus Boland (Chief Executive) 086 2491153 or Louise Lennon (Policy and Communications Officer) 086 1069244

About Irish Rural Link:
Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of over 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level.