Irish Rural Link   
  
19th September 2017   
  
Irish Rural Link continues to voice its concern about rural isolation, closure of services and incidents of crime in rural areas ahead of this year’s Ploughing Championships.

Irish Rural Link (IRL)– the national network representing the interest of rural communities are raising concerns for people living in rural areas, today 19th September as this year’s Ploughing Championship gets underway.

Rural isolation continues to be a major issue for many people, especially older people and people with disabilities living in rural areas. The threat to rural services continues to loom; so far this year there have being cuts to Bus Eireann routes, continued threat of Post Office closures and reduced desk services in Banks in many of the smaller towns and villages across the country. The axing of bus routes and closure of Post Offices and Banks in rural towns and villages over the years have meant these towns and villages have almost disappeared. The axing of such services coupled with migration of younger people to urban centres continues to increase isolation in rural areas.

We have on the one hand, a new Action Plan for Rural Development, launched at the beginning of the year and a Town and Village Renewal Scheme also launched to rejuvenate and revitalise small towns and villages, while on the other, closures to the very services that are needed to keep these towns and villages alive.

Crime in rural areas remains an issue, especially for people living alone. With no crime statistics being published by CSO since Q4 2016, publication of further statistics have been deferred. However, IRL are aware of burglaries that go unreported by people mainly due to the reduced presence of Garda in rural areas.

As we are coming into the winter months and dark evenings, Irish Rural Link is calling for increased security in rural areas. We call on communities to be extra vigilant and to call on older neighbours to ensure they are safe. With the closure of Garda stations, there is a need for more Garda patrolling in rural areas and this needs to be put in place. Community and Text Alert should be encouraged in all rural areas can have a positive impact on reducing crime in an area.   
  
  
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For further information, please contact (anytime):   
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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.