Irish Rural Link

4th July 2017

**Irish Rural Link disappointed there are further delays in rollout of National Broadband Plan in rural areas**

Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities are disappointed that the rollout of the National Broadband Plan is delayed again and won’t begin until at least 2019.

People and businesses in rural areas continue to battle with poor quality broadband and this will come as a further setback for people.

The setting up of a business, expansion of SME’s and Micro Enterprises and in turn, the creation of employment is highly dependent on decent high speed broadband. The longer businesses have to wait for decent broadband the less confidence they will have and will look to locate to other areas where broadband is available.

On the one hand, Government are encouraging more people to go online to bank and pay bills, with reduced bank services and closures of banks and post offices in rural areas. From beginning of 2018, all farm payments will have to be done online, and farmers are being trained to do all registration etc online at present but how will this be done if the rollout of high speed broadband is not delivered.

The new National Planning Framework must ensure that there is a more balanced regional growth. However, this and the implementation of the Action Plan for Rural Development will be compromised if high speed broadband is not available.

Ends

**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