Irish Rural Link

25th January 2017

**Irish Rural Link Meeting Joint Oireacthas Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport to discuss Bus Éireann and Rural Transport**

Irish Rural Link – the national network representing the interest of rural communities are meeting with the Oireachtas Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport today, Wednesday 25th January, to discuss the current situation at Bus Éireann, Expressway Service and the Rural Transport Programme.

Public transport in rural Ireland continues to be a major issue for people living in rural areas and is top of every person’s list of grievances when it comes to rural areas. The lack of public transport impacts both socially and economically on people’s lives.

Anytime there is a report released on public transport, be it Bus Éireann or Irish Rail, services in rural areas are always threatened with closures of routes and people are left wondering if they will have a bus or rail service in a few weeks or months.

Irish Rural Link will be calling for a review of overall Transport Services in Ireland and to seriously examine the terms of reference which govern the Public Service Obligation. Any review must include a social impact analysis and the impact no bus service would have for an area and the people living in that area.

IRL are also calling for better use of the Rural Transport Programme. This service is a lifeline to many people living in rural areas but does not get the recognition it deserves by Government. There is an opportunity now for better integration of this service with other public transport services, such as Bus Éireann and Expressway services, through feeder services and for shorter distance routes.

We welcome Minister Shane Ross’ comments over the past few weeks that no rural services would be affected in the event of closures and the Department of Transport have echoed this in that they will immediately put plans in place to ensure passengers still have a service.

However we are concerned that the worsening crisis enveloping Bus Éireann may curtail even further the availability of public transport in rural areas. If that happens we will be calling on the Department of Transport to ensure that alternative services are provided.

If the Government are serious about implementing all the actions set out in the new Action Plan for Rural Development, launched earlier this week, they need to take serious action now to ensure a public transport services is available in all rural areas.

Ends

**For further information, please contact (anytime):**

Seamus Boland (Chief Executive) 0862491153 or Louise Lennon (Policy and Communications Officer) 0861069244

**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 nearly 500 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level