

Broadband proposal for Mid West's rural communities

THE European Union has been called on to back a proposal to bridge the digital divide in rural communities of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary which are unable to access fibre or wireless broadband services.

The Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly Mid-West Office (formerly Mid West Regional Office) and Clare-based Slí Nua Development are partners of an EU-funded Satellite Broadband for European Regions project (SABER).

The network met in Brussels last week to launch a Satellite Broadband Voucher Scheme which it said should be implemented by the members of the EU and their regional governments to encourage awareness and take-up of satellite broadband solutions across Europe's most rural regions.

The meeting brought together representatives from 21 European regional

authorities, satellite experts and key influencers, including Eutelsat, SES Broadband Services, Airbus Defence and Space, to examine how to accelerate broadband adoption in rural areas.

Majella O'Brien, EU Projects Officer, SERA Mid West Office said the Satellite Broadband Voucher Scheme would be of assistance to communities in the Mid West which have yet to benefit under successive National Broadband schemes and are unlikely to be able to access affordable broadband services in the near future.

"Satellite broadband is a practical and viable solution today but the expense associated with setting up and subscribing to the service can be prohibitive for many. Unlike in North America and Australia, Europe has been relatively slow to drive awareness, acceptance and adoption of sat-

ellite technology," she explained.

Ms O'Brien continued: "Satellite broadband is a viable option for many rural communities which find themselves in a broadband black spot. The Satellite Broadband Voucher Scheme is one method of increasing its take up and helping rural households and business to bridge the digital divide." Patrick Sullivan of Slí Nua Development, an economic development company and SABER project member based in the rural East Clare village of Ogonnelloe, is also backing the proposed Satellite Broadband Voucher Scheme.

"In this digital world, it has been widely accepted that business competitiveness relies on having access to affordable broadband services," he explained. "However, businesses that are located in remote and rural areas of Limerick, Clare and Tipperary for

example, are disadvantaged because they are not able to access affordable broadband services; especially at the higher broadband speeds that are necessary for them to exploit the increasing number of ICT applications and services that are now available on the market."

Mr Sullivan said one solution to addressing the digital divide is the delivery of Broadband Services through satellites, in the same way as many of us receive our television programmes.

He added that the SABER project has developed guidance, in particular targeted at Regional Policy makers, to make them aware that Satellite technology is available to deliver broadband services. The guidance, written by Slí Nua Development and Eutelsat, and which has been reviewed by 17 regions from across Europe, has

focused on the selection of appropriate technologies and deployment models; building the business case for investing in broadband support programmes; exploring funding options; dealing with state aid; and procuring satellite solutions.

Led by CSI-Piemonte in Italy, the 24-month SABER project is partially EU-funded and involves 26 partners, 21 regional authorities and ICT public and private organisations supporting regions in broadband deployment representing 13 countries. During its lifespan, the SABER project has published important, practical information, guidelines and toolkits (some available in several languages) to help national and regional governments close the European Digital Divide by using satellite broadband technology. **For more visit www.project-saber.eu.**

IN BRIEF...

McGrath's concern for Tipp schools

INDEPENDENT TD Mattie McGrath has called on the Minister for Education to give serious and urgent consideration to the pleas of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) regarding the adverse consequences arising from ever increasing class sizes. Deputy McGrath was speaking after meeting with Tipperary delegates at the INTO Oireachtas pre-budget briefing at the Royal Irish Academy:

"The reality these delegates are describing around the issue of chronic over-crowding in our class rooms is truly disturbing. Ireland currently has the second most crowded primary class sizes in the entire European Union. This in turn is having huge knock effects in terms of the required amount of attention and one on one time that each child needs to fully engage with the educational process.

"One of the major issues that is emerging however is the long term professional strain which schools Principals are being subjected to because of the class size issue. Teaching principals have one release day a week to attend to all the administrative requirements that come with that position. "This is causing massive levels of stress and it must be urgently addressed by increasing the amount of release time to at least two days as it is in Northern Ireland and the UK. "

LIT Certificate in Aviation

LIT and Shannon Aviation Centre have partnered to provide a new and exciting programme in aviation.

On successful completion of this 10 week evening course, the learner will have an appreciation and a solid foundation of the core aspects and concepts of aeronautics. They will be capable of explaining the physical laws that govern flight and some of the engineering utilised to achieve it, as well as the practical application of how aircraft are flown,

controlled, and separated. There will be 10 weekly evening classes and also a number of external field trips to aviation facilities in Shannon as part of the programme. There will be an opportunity to experience flight in a light aircraft subject to certain conditions.

Delivered by experienced industry professionals and instructors, this course is ideal for anyone interested in developing their knowledge base in preparation for areas such as Aircraft Engineering Apprenticeship, Aircraft Technician, Air Traffic Control Flight Training, Aviation Business and Management Degree Course, Ground Support and Handling or Aviation Leasing and Finance

The Certificate in Aviation is validated by Limerick Institute of Technology as part of their flexible Learning Programme within the Department of Mechanical and Automobile Engineering and is delivered by Shannon Aviation Centre in Shannon Co Clare. Further details are available from Shannon Aviation Centre 061 363687 or email: info@atlantic-airventure.com.

Full house for Westport challenge

With over 160 participants, mostly from North Tipperary, it is a full house for the 17th annual charity challenge event in Westport that supports visually impaired people and other charities. All is set for a super weekend with a choice of 7 walks on offer to suit all fitness levels and 2 very interesting slideshows in the Knockranny House Hotel. One is given by Dan Condren and features the group from Mid-Tipp Hillwalkers who climbed all of Ireland's major mountain ridges this summer. The other is from Carmel Needham and features the historic Camino journey over the high Pyrenees Mountains from France into Spain. Those who can't make it to Westport can join in for the event re-union. This will take place in Upperchurch on October 31st starting with a captivating Halloween Walk by moonlight which is open to all comers. Further information from Michael Sutton 086 4009989.



A Mega Push from Dingle to Dublin was organised to fund a new Bumbleance Children's Ambulance Service. The Mega Push team received a tremendous welcome in Nenagh en route to Dublin. PHOTOGRAPH: BRIDGET DELANEY

Mega push fundraiser

THE BUMBLEance mega Push Crew received a great welcome and support when they passed through Tipperary on their way to Dublin recently. The group pushed a special BUMBLEance vehicle from Dingle to Dublin and in the process raised much-needed funds towards the development of "BUMBLEance", the National Children's Ambulance service. While

in Tipp, the team's accommodation was kindly sponsored by the Lakeside Hotel, Killaloe and Django's Hostel in Cloughjordan. The convoy travelled through Birdhill, Nenagh and Roscrea before travelling on to Moneygall where they visited the Barack Obama Plaza and Ollie Hayes' Bar in Moneygall before departing for Mountrath.