



Press Release

HEAnet delivers 100 Mbps high speed broadband for all of Ireland's 780 post-primary schools on behalf of Government

Education Minister O'Sullivan and Communications Minister White announce completion of 100 Mbps broadband programme for post-primary schools

100 Mbps broadband service provides equal upload and download speeds simultaneously

Thursday 4th December 2014: Every post-primary school in the country now has high speed broadband connections as a result of a €30 million, three year programme rolled out on behalf of the Government by HEAnet, Ireland's National Education and Research Network. This equates to 780 school locations including all post-primary schools as well as special and hospital schools.

The 780 schools now have 100 Mbps broadband connections which will serve as a catalyst for the further integration of ICT and digital skills in the classroom. The announcement was made jointly by Education & Skills Minister Jan O'Sullivan, T.D. and Alex White T.D., Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, at Mount Temple Comprehensive School in Dublin.

The broadband programme, which represents one of the most ambitious technology roll-outs to the Irish education sector in recent times, was delivered within budget and a highly challenging three year schedule. It was completed in collaboration with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Education and Skills.

The national roll-out followed a successful pilot phase of the programme in 2010 when a first tranche of 78 schools nationwide were connected to the HEAnet network. A decision to expand the programme to all 780 schools was announced by Government in February of 2012.

The national reach of the programme has required the building of new infrastructure in locations where there was extremely limited high-speed broadband availability up until now. For example, under this programme 100 Mbps broadband is provided to school communities on four separate islands off the coasts of Galway and Donegal.

"HEAnet is very pleased to have successfully delivered this programme on behalf of the Irish Government and Irish post-primary schools", **said John Boland, HEAnet Chief Executive.**

"Delivering high-speed broadband to every post-primary school in the country has involved digging streets, laying fibre cable, erecting masts and radio dishes, and installing network equipment across

the length and breadth of the country. Schools have played their part in preparing for the installation of the service, with higher education institutions facilitating access to their campuses to enable delivery of cost-effective services to schools in regional areas.”

“This is an excellent example of the Government maximising public investment by using HEAnet and the higher education institutions’ shared infrastructure. The Government decision to appoint HEAnet to build and manage this new network reaffirms HEAnet’s value as a shared services provider to the entire education sector.”

The broadband service being provided to the schools is of an extremely high quality and delivers symmetrical bandwidth connectivity meaning it provides equal upload/download speeds simultaneously; an important consideration in cloud computing and two-way communications such as video conferencing.

Other characteristics that differentiate the bandwidth supply in the 100 Mbps project from standard commercial offerings include proactive network management, superior service level, and zero contention, meaning a school’s broadband connection is not shared with other subscribers. These characteristics enable 100 Mbps programme to offer schools very high network availability which in turn offers assurance to schools that the broadband connection can be relied upon when incorporated in the classroom environment.

The programme has been achieved with the co-operation of a range of technology vendors including: AirSpeed Telecom, Digiweb (Viatel), eircom, enet, Imagine Communications, UPC, Vodafone, and Agile Networks. HEAnet also acknowledge the support of the ESB whose fibre underpins a significant portion of the national education network.

“We would like to express our thanks to each of these providers for their valued contribution to the overall success of this programme”, **said HEAnet CTO, Ronan Byrne.**

“We believe that the completion of this programme represents a landmark event and that the provision of high-speed broadband to post-primary schools will have very meaningful benefits for pupil learning outcomes in the years ahead. It will support the development of ICT and STEM related learning in Irish post-primary schools which will ultimately deliver real benefits for Irish society and its future economic prosperity.”

This programme is funded by the Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources and the Department of Education & Skills, supported by Ireland's EU Structural Funds Programme and the European Regional Development Fund.

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