



Office of the Director of
**Telecommunications
Regulation**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Narrowband licences to bring a wider range of telecommunications services to rural areas

Ireland among the first in Europe to offer this type of licence

Etain Doyle, Telecommunications Regulator today (16th June 2000) issued narrowband licences to *eircom plc* and Irish Multichannel respectively. This follows on from a competition held last year for the right to operate FWPMA (Fixed Wireless Point to Multipoint Access) services. The licences are valid for 10 years.

FWPMA or Wireless in the Local Loop offers an alternative means to copper wire of connecting customers premises to the nearest switch. It offers a radio-based alternative to copper or fibre optic cable. These licences will enable these companies offer basic telephony, Internet, e-commerce and ISDN connections to their customers.

At the presentation of the licences, the Regulator, Etain Doyle said “ Ireland is among the first in Europe to offer this type of licence. These new licences will enable *eircom* and Irish Multichannel deliver phone/fax/ internet capability to small businesses and residential customers in a more flexible , less expensive and timely manner than on traditional lines . This is very important in ensuring that the Information Society is inclusive and not just confined to areas where fibre optic cable is available or economic to roll out.”

Congratulating both companies on winning their licences the Regulator said, “ I am confident that the introduction of these licences will facilitate increased competition and choice thus ensuring that the Irish consumer will avail of lower prices and higher quality services.”

At the presentation Mr Joseph Styles, Regulatory Manager *eircom* said “ having successfully competed for and won this narrowband licence *eircom* will now concentrate on rolling out this new technology immediately to our customers. This will be particularly effective in complementing existing technologies to provide advanced communications services to customers located in rural areas. We are committed to advancing Ireland’s position in the Information Age and therefore it is vitally important that all customers have access to e-commerce applications, fast Internet access and advanced data solutions.”

According to Mr William Fagan, Director of Irish Multichannel. “We are delighted to have won this narrowband licence and it will enable us provide basic telephony services to our customers as well as enhancing the services already provided to our existing 120,000 MMDS customers through the provision of interactive services such as the Internet in conjunction with Digital TV”

Earlier this week the Regulator issued new cable and MMDS licences to the Suir Nore group of companies . The companies in the Suir Nore Group were recently acquired by Princes Holdings Ltd which trade as Irish Multichannel. Under the new licences approximately 60,000 households will have the choice of digital television and interactive services by December 2001.

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