

# Broadband Information



## What is broadband?

Simply put, broadband is high speed, always on, unmetered internet access, as opposed to the narrowband of dial-up access which is both slow and typically charged by the minute. In gathering its statistics the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) defines any connection with a download speed of at least 256 Kb/s as broadband. Dial-up can usually get up to a maximum of 56 Kb/s, just to put it into perspective. Indeed in some parts of Europe and Asia what we consider and pay for as broadband would be dismissed as outdated and acutely slow.

## Why is broadband important?

Beyond the vague rally cry of "Bridging the digital divide" and buzzwords such as "the knowledge economy", broadband has become increasingly central to our lives. While telecommuting is yet to be a reality for the vast majority, reliable high speed communications are increasingly key to the economy, letting small local businesses take advantage of the internet to project themselves onto the national and international market. Broadband is a source of entertainment and communication, from online games to keeping in touch with distant friends and relatives using Skype, instant messengers and social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace. The importance of broadband to education is increasingly apparent, be it helping a student prepare for their Leaving Cert or allowing an adult to study online in the evenings for a degree.

## Why is there a problem with it?

Broadband access in Ireland is in shameful state. While industry and government go on about the term "Celtic tiger", Ireland languishes well below the global average for broadband penetration and performs very poorly against its European neighbours, apparently somewhere in the ten worst broadband speeds in the world. In parts of the country the only option for Broadband is via satellite which is both highly expensive and limited, and thanks to poor regulation and investment even in urban areas, access can be problematic.

## How can I get it?

To get the show going, a petition has been started in Skeheenarinky and local areas to get Eircom's attention regarding the issue. A legally-binding petition needs a name, address and signature to work so a space has been included for you.

All you have to do is fill out the included form and post it to the address on the right-hand side. Once enough forms have been gathered, they will all be sent to Eircom.

## The National Broadband Scheme

The National Broadband Scheme (NBS) is a program by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to deliver universal broadband access in Ireland by the provision of services to those areas (estimated to contain 10% of the population) where commercial operators do not reach.

The position of service provider for the NBS was put to competitive tender, a process which was won by Three Ireland, part of the Hutchison Whampoa group.

Three Ireland serves 93% of NBS customers with a wireless offering based on I-HSPA, a 3G mobile technology. The remainder of customers are offered a satellite-based service, which as said previously is not at all reliable.

3G internet services, due to their low speeds, high latency and unreliable service are not considered broadband by most other EU and OECD regulators, and are explicitly excluded from the OECD's broadband statistics. 3G internet is widely termed "midband" because of this.

Three's apparent speeds, even the minimum speeds quoted, will not be achievable by many users. In busy areas, users will achieve little more than dial-up Internet speeds. Such is the recognition, internationally, that 3G does not deliver a reliable and scalable broadband product. 3G Internet is widely termed "midband" because of this. ComReg, Ireland's telecommunications regulator is one of very few regulators that do include "midband" subscribers in their broadband subscriber reports.

**So please sign and post the petition overleaf and help bring broadband a step closer to Skeheenarinky.**