



Broadband to be accessible nationwide by the end of 2007, says Dempsey

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NO place in the country will be without access to broadband by the end of 2007, Communications Minister Noel Dempsey said yesterday.

Ireland, he said, would by then be on a par with other EU countries for broadband availability.

Mr Dempsey said: "We are way behind but we are moving up the table rapidly. We started behind others. I think the country should be well catered for by the end of 2007. We have more than 250,000 subscribers at this stage and we have set a target of 400,000 by the end of this year."

He said broadband was more important in today's world than the roads infrastructure.

Mr Dempsey was speaking at Killaloe, Co Clare, where he announced 29 rural broadband projects for 80 communities in the mid-west.

Shannon Broadband, a public sector consortium involving Shannon Development and the local councils in Limerick City, Limerick County, Clare, north Tipperary and Offaly, supported by the Mid-West Regional Authority, is rolling out this network in the mid-west at a cost of €3 million.

Shannon Broadband has completed a 63-kilometre fibre network costing €6.8m in the greater Limerick city area.

Shannon Broadband will soon be available in Roscrea, Newcastle West, Nenagh, Birr, Kilrush, Abbeyfeale, Banagher and Templemore.

When completed, it will

represent an investment in excess of €20m.

Mr Dempsey said the principal reason for the slow roll out of broadband has been the lack of investment by the private sector in suitable infrastructure.

But he said the Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) project is designed to address this deficit by building networks on an open access basis.

He said: "Broadband is arguably the most important development of the past decade and within a few years it has become the single most important technology for business, commerce, education, health and a huge contributor to social inclusion."

"The Government believes that the availability of open-access telecoms infrastructure is necessary for the attraction of business and investment opportunities to the regions."

Amid speculation that an Australian consortium wants to make a takeover bid for Eircom, Mr Dempsey said such a move would not impede the roll out of broadband.

He said: "I don't think people will put this kind of money into Eircom now to buy out, without having some plan to provide and roll out broadband a lot quicker than it has been."



Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources Noel Dempsey on board the Killaloe/Ballina search and rescue vessel, to launch the County and Group Broadband Scheme, with Shannon Development chief executive Kevin Thompstone, Orla Duffy of Irish Broadband and crew member Chris Carey.

Picture: Kieran Clancy