



3G v WIMAX

Conor Brophy

IF ITS newly-deployed WiMax technology lives up to expectations Irish Broadband may have saved €114m on a 3G phone licence.

Based on technology developed by Intel WiMax, a souped-up version of the wi-fi wireless internet technology available in hotels and coffee shops around the country, it poses a threat to conventional mobile networks. WiMax offers wide enough signal coverage to carry a mobile phone call.

Recently Korean mobile giant Samsung released a mobile phone that uses WiMax rather than relying solely on mobile phone masts to obtain a signal.

In the US, mobile operator Sprint Nextel is so convinced of the merits of the technology that it is

spending \$3bn to roll-out a WiMax network while its rivals invest in 3G.

Orla Duffy, head of marketing with Irish Broadband, said its customers will be able to use the network for mobile calls in the near future, providing more competition for mobile operators.

"People have underestimated the possibilities of WiMax and where it can go. This is coming and not as far off as a lot of people think," she said.

Duffy said Irish Broadband, which is rolling out the technology around the country at present, envisages a scenario where people will have seamless, nationwide access to both broadband internet and mobile phone services using a combination of WiMax and traditional mobile networks.