



Iarnród Eireann holds out for Wimax

BY DAN O'GRADY at 90mph.

Last year, several English and European rail networks extended on-board internet services for those needing to work en route to their destination. So what hope for Iarnród Eireann?

What has actually happened is that a decision has been made not to opt for wi-fi. Iarnród Eireann has argued that it will become obsolete, to be replaced with Wimax. As the name suggests, Wimax is essentially a supercharged version of wi-fi.

It offers much higher speeds and a much greater transmission distance. So whereas with wi-fi you would need to have a communications device in each train carriage, with Wimax you only need one along every 70 or so kilometres of track.

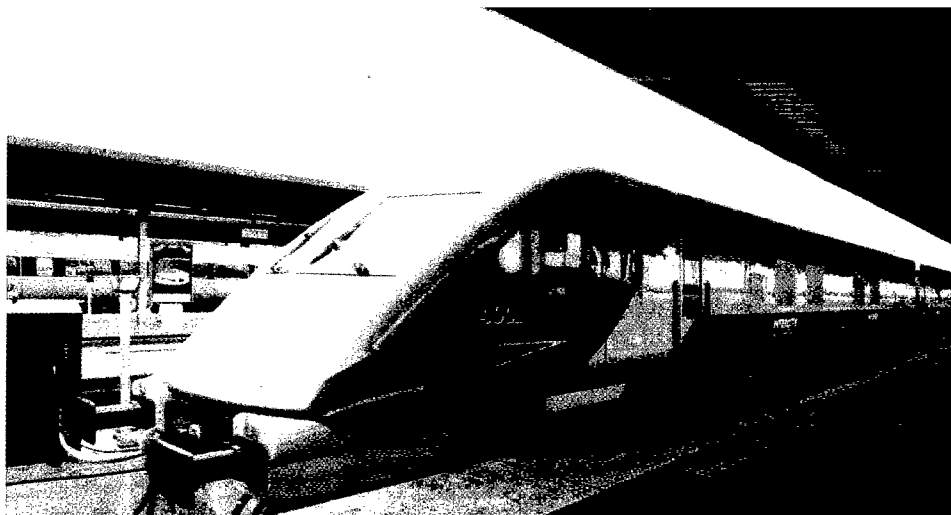
It also offers much stronger encryption and as the signal is stronger it is less subject to interference. The only Wimax service currently on offer at present is Irish Broadband's 'Go' service.

Costing €40 per month, this connects to a speed of 0.5Mbs (see connections panel opposite).

While this technology is not yet common, there are over 170 trial deployments in many different countries. It is hotly tipped to be successful and then Iarnród Eireann will seek tenders for the introduction of the technology to the Irish rail network.

An alternative option while commuters wait until new technology is introduced is to purchase a mobile connect card. This will allow you to connect to the internet from any location. The drawbacks however are its slower speed (see connections panel).

In addition, the signal is subject to coverage and there is very little information available on the signal's ability to seek out a receiver travelling



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