



## Front Page

## News Alerts

Enter email Address

Subscribe

**News & Analysis**  
Industry & Markets  
Education & Science  
e-Government & EU  
Comms & Mobile  
Data & Security  
Media & Marketing  
Enterprise

**Reviews**  
Products  
Websites

**People**  
Interviews  
Appointments  
Post Appointments

**Events**  
Day by day  
Post Your Event

## News Search



-click here-

**Make this your  
Homepage**  
-click here-

**Tell us what  
you think!**  
-click here-



**e-MONDAY**

Your weekly  
review of ICT  
in Ireland.

**e-THURSDAY**



➤ To download further information and **CASE STUDIES** on how businesses like yours have benefited from the **Business Communications Manager...**



hosted by  
**hosting365**

**Subscribe  
Now**

**WIRELESS  
SKILLNET**

Technology  
Training

## Rural broadband consortium looks to export model

07.02.2007 - Despite the Government's decision to scrap the Group Broadband Scheme for rural areas, a consortium consisting of broadband companies, a technology giant, a hosting firm and a leading Irish bank are planning to press ahead with plans for Ireland as well as export markets in South Africa and parts of the Middle East.

In June last year the Azotel consortium, consisting of e-Net, the firm responsible for running parts of the Government's €170m metropolitan area network (MAN) strategy, telecoms equipment firm Motorola, Dublin firm Hosting365, Cork broadband provider Azotel Outside and the Bank of Ireland.

The objective of the consortium was to take the bureaucracy and technological know-how out of the equation for local groups or wireless internet service providers (WISPs) by providing monitoring, support, billing, hardware, hosting, financing and backhaul.

In recent weeks it emerged that the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources decided to scrap the Group Broadband Scheme, citing poor demand. Out of €5.9m in grants for 162 approved projects under the County and Group Broadband Scheme, a mere €785,755 was actually drawn down by the applications.

However, according to John O'Hare of Azotel, the Azotel consortium had succeeded beyond its own expectations and now covers 25pc of the country. "The franchise aimed to make it profitable to roll out broadband in local areas and we have been successful at that," he said.

He agrees that it is ironic that while the [rural broadband] scheme evidently failed to capture the imagination in Ireland – whether at a government level or at a local level – it has engendered considerable interest overseas, enough to encourage the consortium to export their expertise.

"Our approach has captured the imagination outside of Ireland and we have guys working in parts of the Middle East. We are also looking at rolling the product out in South Africa. In addition we have added a voice component so that WISPs can provide voice telephony services."

On the Government's decision to scrap the Group Broadband Scheme, O'Hare said he believed that the Government needs to rethink its approach to rolling out broadband in rural areas.

"The issues we addressed with the franchise approach are largely the issues that affected the Government's approach. Our approach eliminates replication and duplication of technology and administration.

"Our message was that we would standardise and reduce the cost of rolling out a network so that it would be profitable for a provider to provide it in areas considered unviable by telecom firms.

"We understand that [with the Group Broadband Scheme] there were issues around quality and the ability of communities to meet demand and roll out broadband in their areas. That's why awarded funds weren't drawn down.

"It proves the point that there is a need for a much more co-ordinated approach to solving Ireland's broadband problem. If there are 120 organisations providing broadband, that's a lot of overhead.

"Our recommendation is that the Government centralises rural broadband rollout and avoid duplications. Wireless is definitely the solution in rural areas. The problem is that by awarding it to one scheme at a time takes a lot of time. The Government needs to come up with a mechanism that will attract operators to provide rural broadband in a proper fashion, county by county.

"We put our franchise together because we saw shortfalls and inadequacies in the original Group Broadband Scheme," said O'Hare.

### also in this section

Carphone Warehouse to create 150 jobs nationwide

Software investment to electrify all-island market

Boards.ie acquires Boards Group in expansion play

BT revenues up 5pc



**Broadband  
on the move**

Make the most of now



Returning to the company's plans to export its business model overseas, O'Hare said; "The market is global. We practically stumbled on the opportunity to help developing countries roll out infrastructure in an economical and viable way.

"The model we have is a very cost-effective model. Governments across the world are into a certain amount of ownership," he concluded.

By John Kennedy

 [Mail this article to your colleagues](#)

[<Home](#)

[Industry & Markets>](#)

[FRONT PAGE](#) : [SEARCH](#) : [SYNDICATION](#) : [PRIVACY](#) : [CONTACT](#) : [IN-PRINT](#) : [FEEDBACK](#) : [SITEMAP](#)

[Industry & Markets](#) : [Education & Science](#) : [Skills](#) : [e-Government & EU](#) : [Comms & Mobile](#)  
[Data & Security](#) : [Media & Marketing](#) : [Enterprise](#)

---

[siliconrepublic.com](#) All content copyright 2002-2005, siliconrepublic publishing ltd - all rights reserved  
email [info@siliconrepublic.com](mailto:info@siliconrepublic.com)

powered by [NewsVendor.com](#)

