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Firms team up to 'connect the unconnected'



Wednesday June 28, 08:47 AM



By Ciara O'Brien

A new initiative has been launched that could help bring broadband to previously unconnected areas of Ireland ([IREL.OB - news](#)).

Hosting365, Azotel and Motorola (NYSE: [MOT - news](#)) have teamed up to offer a wireless franchise service to potential broadband providers around the country.

The solution includes wireless broadband technology provided by Motorola, through its Canopy solution, and support services by Hosting 365. For its part, Azotel will provide core network and back office functions for operators, while Bank of Ireland (Dublin: [BIR.IR - news](#)) is offering financing to potential operators.

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Speaking at the launch of the new service on Tuesday, John O'Hare, managing director of Azotel said the service gave providers the chance to deliver broadband where it had previously not been commercially viable to do so.

O'Hare explained that the Azotel solution involves lower set-up costs and a shorter roll out time than other solutions. There is a EUR5,000 fee associated with choosing the Azotel platform.

"The new Azotel solution offers individual entrepreneurs -- existing and potential internet service providers -- a unique opportunity to become involved in broadband rollout," said Paul Lynch, sales director, Hosting365, also speaking at the launch event.

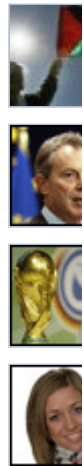
"A wireless internet service provider who invests in the 'wireless in a box' (WIB) solution, allows the broadband operator to outsource a combination of highly technical network management functions and time consuming administrative back office functions to Azotel."

Ireland has a poor record in broadband penetration, with numerous international surveys highlighting the lack of access. While access in urban areas of Dublin is a relatively simple proposition, rural areas fare worse. Because of the "last mile" and issues with unbundling the local loop, broadband access in rural areas is more problematic, with some areas simply not being able to get high-speed access.

"I think we've got a genuine opportunity to connect the unconnected and deliver a broadband solution into rural areas," said Ian Bayly, director, Motorola Canopy, speaking at the event.

The initiative could also lead to more group broadband schemes (GBS) being established in rural areas, according to the companies involved. This area is already under review by the Government; in June, Communications Minister Noel Dempsey told [ENN](#) that his department was considering bypassing local community groups and dealing directly with private operators in the third phase of the (GBS).

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