

The Kildare Nationalist

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Heydon seeks clarity on broadband roll-out

South Kildare Fine Gael Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he was satisfied that the remaining bidder in the national broadband plan has the capability and capacity to deliver on what will be a very extensive project of extending high-speed broadband to some 540,000 houses around the country which do not currently have it.

“One does not have to be from Roscommon, the West or some very isolated rural part of Ireland to be in need of the national broadband plan to deliver,” he said. “I am acutely aware of that from my constituents in Kildare South, whether one is young or old, running a small business or have the ability to work from home a few days a week instead of clogging up the M7 and the M50, with the corresponding improvement to quality of life.”

He said he wanted to recognise the role that the national broadband plan has played to date. “While 19% of premises in South Kildare require State intervention, the €2.75 billion private investment in the last five years has provided momentum for this plan. If the consortium is successful in its roll-out, will it start in more than one place?”

In response, Minister Denis Naughten said just as the eir roll-out is happening in every county across the country at the same time, this project - the State intervention phase of the national broadband plan - will be rolled out across the country simultaneously. “The broadband offices in each of the local authorities are working, through Minister Ring's Department, to designate the programme of build-out in each local authority,” he said. “The intention is that it would happen in the first year right across the country.”

Chronic state of Kildare roads highlighted

The chronic state of rural roads in Co. Kildare was highlighted in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy James Lawless.

There are many such roads that need attention in Kildare, he said, but they would not need so much today if the commuter system were working and if the public transport corridors and public transport system in which we were supposed to be investing over many years were able to cope with the demand.

Speaking during a debate on a Fianna Fáil motion on regional roads, he said train carriages are full coming through stations and the car parks at those stations are also full.

“Irish Rail figures recently confirmed to me that the Sallins station car park is at 165% occupancy on a daily basis,” he said. “This means that two-thirds more cars are squeezing into the car park than are permitted under health and safety regulations.”

“When I asked the Minister a parliamentary question about investment in the rail network and carriages, he confirmed that no rolling stock has been purchased by him in the three years since he took office,” he continued. “He has spent absolutely nothing on rolling stock. When I asked about the industrial disputes relating to Bus Éireann and services through Kildare, Meath and elsewhere, which also affect rail services, the Minister told me they were operational issues. When I asked him about issues such as the ten-minute DART service, which is a programme to fast-track the delivery of DART and Arrow services across the commuter belt and the Phoenix Park tunnel, is a pivotal piece of the greater Dublin area infrastructure, he again told me they were operational issues of which he could not possibly be expected to have any awareness. I find it staggering that a Minister for transport would not know about the jewels in the crown of transport infrastructure in the greater Dublin area.”

Call for regulation of gambling industry

The importance of a regulatory system that will aid and assist those who suffer from problem gambling was highlighted in the Dáil by Deputy Martin Heydon.

“Last week was Responsible Gambling Week,” he said. “The Gambling Control Bill is important legislation dealing with a comprehensive licensing and regulatory framework for gambling. In an industry that is developing very quickly, with many new technologies ahead of pace, it is important that we have in place a regulatory system that will aid and assist those who suffer from problem gambling and address issues relating to advertising and so on.”

In response, Minister of State for Justice David Stanton said on 10 January, he briefed Cabinet on the legislation and the Government approved proposals to make changes to the 2013 scheme of the Gambling Control Bill. “The main changes are to establish an independent regulatory authority for the gambling industry,” he said. “Under the 2013 approach the Minister was the regulator. This change is in line with international best practice. A change is also being made to rationalise the licensing approach to gambling activities and to clarify the provisions concerning the licensing machines.”