

Introduction: Ireland's Contribution to the 2005 GSR Best Practice Guidelines on Spectrum Management to Promote Broadband Access:

Principle Two: Balancing the Use of Licensed and Licence-exempt Spectrum.

A number of local initiatives have taken effect to provide broadband access using licence-exempt spectrum. In Ireland, from July 2002, wideband data transmission systems for the provision of fixed wireless access networks/metropolitan area networks (FWA/MAN) have been permitted in the 5.8 GHz (5725 – 5875 MHz) band on a licence-exempt basis, provided that the maximum radiated power does not exceed 2W eirp. This higher power level, over and above the current European harmonised standard, has increased the coverage achievable and hence the utility of the 5.8 GHz band.

This initiative provided some impetus for small market players to enter the market at very low cost, to gain some experience of broadband provision and to test market demand for various broadband services. A number of successful operations using the licence-exempt spectrum, having proved their business case, have now moved to licensed spectrum. ComReg has committed itself to continue to identify appropriate spectrum allocations, both licensed and licence-exempt, for Wireless Access Services which are supported by choice and availability of equipment.

Principle Three: Access to Cost Effective Backhaul Infrastructure. Just as consumers in semi-rural or rural areas may not have access to ADSL, the providers of wireless broadband are hampered by the lack of cost-effective backhaul infrastructure, e.g., fibre. The alternatives such as satellite or point-to-point wireless fixed links are significantly more expensive compared to the costs of providing a wireless base station for broadband access.

In Ireland consideration is being given to permitting the use of point-to-point links within the broadband access spectrum to provide a cost effective backhaul operation. While this is difficult to accomplish from a spectrum management viewpoint, it is seen as a viable alternative to the traditional and more expensive alternatives.