

## **Making the most of broadband**

An increasing number of people have become more dependent on regular use of the internet at work or at home. Typical usage involves sending and receiving emails, finding information on websites and often involves downloading files from the internet. Many people find that using a standard telephone line to access the internet is unacceptably slow. In contrast, a broadband connection provides additional speed and capacity that make internet usage more efficient and satisfactory.

In order to encourage the use of their broadband products, the major broadband service providers are advertising heavily in the media at present. So what are the benefits of broadband that attract committed internet users to pay up to €40 extra per month for broadband usage.

- If using a standard telephone line to access the internet, you must pay an additional charge every time you use the internet and you cannot make or receive telephone calls while online. In contrast, you pay a fixed monthly charge for a broadband connection, which is always 'on', meaning that your PC is always connected to the internet. A broadband connection also enables you to make and receive telephone calls while online.
- As already highlighted above, the efficiency of a broadband connection saves time and can thereby improve the user's productivity while online.
- There are many additional applications you can use your computer for when you have broadband. For example:
  - Voice over IP (Internet Protocol) is an application that enables you to make telephone calls using an internet connection instead of a standard telephone line. You can make such telephone calls for a fraction of the cost of using a standard telephone line. To make such calls from your computer, it is necessary to purchase a headset or IP telephone for your computer.
  - Video conferencing is an application whereby interactive video and audio signals enable participants at both ends of the connection to see each other while talking. This application demands a high capacity connection (bandwidth) to and from the internet. Not all standard broadband products offer sufficient capacity to successfully run interactive video conferencing. If this is the case, it is still possible to download and view video material in cases when an interactive video conversation is not necessary.

There are many other examples of how you can use your computer if you have a broadband connection. In summary, a broadband connection opens up the possibility of a host of applications that offer social, educational and business benefits.

However, broadband is still not generally available outside the major centres of population. The Government recognises the importance of making broadband available throughout the country and is currently providing grant funding for that purpose under the County and Group Broadband Scheme. In North Tipperary, this scheme offers a 30% grant for the provision of broadband services to under-served areas.

- The North Tipperary Broadband Group is working in partnership with Shannon Broadband to promote the provision and usage of broadband throughout North Tipperary and has provided advice and assistance to community representatives

and broadband service providers in the preparation of County and Group Broadband Scheme proposals for certain areas of North Tipperary. Further details available at [www.tipperary.com/broadband](http://www.tipperary.com/broadband)

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**Next week**

- Different broadband products that are available.
- Broadband seminar in Tipperary Institute on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.