

Building Ireland’s digital backbone

Siro’s John Keaney explains to **Penny Gray** how fibre broadband is helping to build a more connected Ireland



Mike Quaid, construction director with Homeland Group, and John Keaney, chief executive of Siro

As Ireland accelerates investment in housing, transport and utilities, digital connectivity has become just as fundamental to national infrastructure. High-speed fibre broadband is no longer simply about faster internet speeds; it underpins modern businesses, hybrid working, digital public services and sustainable communities.

For John Keaney, chief executive of Siro, fibre infrastructure should be viewed in the same way as roads, water and electricity – a long-term national asset that supports economic growth and quality of life.

“We’ve always been a catalyst for change,” he said. “When Siro was established 12 years ago, there was virtually no fibre broadband in Ireland. Today, Ireland has one of the strongest fibre infrastructures in Europe, and we’re proud to have played a significant role in that transformation.”

Established as a joint venture between ESB and Vodafone, Siro has built its network using ESB’s existing poles and ducts, creating a cost-efficient and sustainable model for fibre deployment. The company now provides wholesale fibre access to more than 712,000 homes and businesses through over 20 retail providers, giving customers both high-speed connectivity and genuine choice.

Around 86 per cent of Irish premises now have access to fibre broadband, reflecting significant public and private investment.

“Reliable connectivity has become fundamental to how we live and work,” said Keaney. “Hybrid working, cloud services, AI, streaming and connected devices all depend on resilient fibre infrastructure. Fibre is no longer a luxury; it’s essential infrastructure for a modern economy.”

But Keaney believes building the network is only half the challenge.

“Setting a target date for switching off copper isn’t really about copper

“Ireland has invested over €6 billion, split between €3 billion in state investment and a further €3 billion commercial investment, in fibre infrastructure. Rolling out the network is only part of the job. The real objective is making sure homes and businesses actually use it. It’s like building a new hospital and then not encouraging people to use it.”

Business adoption, he said, has not kept pace with residential demand.

“Businesses increasingly rely on cloud services, AI, large-scale data exchange and resilient digital infrastructure, yet adoption of fibre remains slower than it should be. We need to encourage businesses to move away from ageing copper networks because fibre is more resilient, more reliable and designed for future growth.”

Siro has been calling for a roadmap towards switching Ireland away from legacy copper networks, arguing this would encourage wider adoption.

“Setting a target date for switching off copper isn’t really about copper,” said Keaney. “It’s about encouraging widespread adoption of fibre. In 15 or 20 years, every home and business will be connected by fibre. The question is why wait that long when we can begin capturing those benefits today?”

The company is also playing a growing role in housing delivery by working with developers to integrate broadband infrastructure from the outset.

“We recognised that new housing developments would become a major area of demand,” Keaney explained. “By using existing ESB infrastructure, we can

reduce costs, minimise environmental impact, save space and deliver a future-proof fibre network from day one.”

That approach aligns with the EU’s Gigabit Infrastructure Act, which aims to make broadband deployment faster and more efficient through greater infrastructure sharing.

Rather than multiple operators installing separate fibre networks in every development, Siro has developed an open infrastructure model that allows other providers to use the same fibre network inside estates and apartment developments.

“For developers, it’s a compelling proposition,” said Keaney. “They get one efficient fibre network instead of multiple duplicate installations while maintaining competition and customer

choice. It saves space, reduces costs and supports faster housing delivery.”

Looking ahead, Keaney believes Ireland has the opportunity to become a global leader in digital connectivity if investment continues and adoption keeps pace.

“My ambition is that every home and business in Ireland is using fibre by 2030. World-class connectivity gives Ireland a real competitive advantage and becomes an enabler for every sector, from healthcare and education to enterprise and public services.”

While infrastructure discussions often focus on delays, Keaney believes Ireland should also recognise its achievements.

“Ireland has come an incredibly long way. Major infrastructure investment takes time and requires ambition, but we should also recognise what’s been achieved.”

For Siro, the priority remains innovation, operational excellence and supporting the partners who bring its wholesale network to homes and businesses.

“Connectivity underpins everything else we want to achieve as a country,” said Keaney. “Whether it’s housing, enterprise, education, healthcare or public services, world-class digital infrastructure is an essential part of Ireland’s future.”

For more information, see www.siro.ie

The numbers

712k

Homes and businesses with access to wholesale fibre through Siro

86%

Of Irish premises now have access to fibre broadband



BE FIBRE FIRST WITH YOUR DEVELOPMENT



SIRO is 100% full-fibre broadband built on the ESB network and that means no copper, not a scrap of it, just super-fast, ultra-reliable technology. And because we’re available to over 720,000 premises, communities across Ireland now enjoy fast, future-proofed fibre connectivity for glitch-free working, flawless gaming, and lag-free streaming.

For developers, planning or building new estates, SIRO is dependable and hassle-free with ongoing maintenance and repair provided. And the best part? It comes at absolutely no extra cost. And being a wholesaler supporting multiple retail providers, your residents get genuine choice from the moment they unpack their boxes.

So, reach out to our New Developments Team. Our experts will work with you from planning right through to handover. Find out more at siro.ie/developers/



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