



Office of the Director of
**Telecommunications
Regulation**

PRESS RELEASE

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CABLE/MMDS COMPANIES AGREE TO NEW LICENSING REGIME

Four of the existing cable and MMDS licence holders - Casey Cablevision, Cablelink, Princes Holdings and Cable Management Ireland - have agreed to surrender their current licences in favour of the new framework proposed by the Director of Telecommunications Regulation, Etain Doyle. A response by the fifth licensee, Suir-Nore Relays, is expected late this evening.

Welcoming their acceptance, the Regulator said, "This is a significant step forward in Ireland's plans for digitalisation. The old issues of the past have been put aside and Irish consumers can look forward to very high quality broadcasts, expanded choice of programming, including many discretionary services and competing delivery services."

The licensing framework proposed by the Regulator provides for guaranteed provision of digital services to consumers within a maximum period of five years. However, it is expected that operators may proceed more quickly in order to compete with digital satellite services and the Irish digital terrestrial platform, which is expected to roll out in late 2000.

Enhanced consumer protection is paramount in the new licensing regime, which includes a code of practice for handling complaints. It is also intended to review the rate regulation mechanism in order to set up a new system better geared to needs of the consumer and the realities of the market.

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“There have been no additional understandings or commitments further to the terms outlined in ODTR 98/63” the Regulator said. “I am anxious to proceed with this new licensing regime so that my attention can be turned to other platforms”. She confirmed that an early resolution of the question of licensing deflectors is intended. Until this can be completed, the existing position of deflectors remains unchanged.

It is expected that the culmination of the process – the conclusion of the old regime and the introduction of the new – will be completed in the next few weeks. The Regulator looks forward to a new competitive environment which embraces digital technology and which will accelerate future convergence with other telecommunications services.

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