Irish Rural Link

26th October 2017

**Irish Rural Link Hosts Information Briefing on Rural Services**

Irish Rural Link (IRL) – the national network representing the interest of rural communities are hosting an information Day on rural services in Buswells Hotel today, Thursday 26th October.

The main issues that will be discussed tomorrow will be:

* Meals on Wheels and challenges these organisations are currently facing. There are also many opportunities for Meals on Wheels and playing a bigger role in community care and the many benefits – both health and social benefits Meals and Wheels gives to a person.
* Rural Transport in general – issues Local Link companies face in terms of Budget allocations and how they can be part of the wider public transport system.
* Other Disadvantages in rural areas in terms of employment opportunities, quality of jobs, rural isolation - especially for marginalised groups of people – who are at greater risk of poverty and are often hardest to reach in terms of social inclusion.

Rural Ireland continues to encounter many challenges and has not seen the same level of growth or employment as other parts of the country.

With the vote for Drink Driving Legislation happening today, the impact this will have on people living in rural areas and how rural transport can be a solution for this. Providers of Meals on Wheels services in rural areas and Rural Transport providers – Local Link companies as well as some of their passengers will be in attendance at the briefing.

One of the measures Minister Ross has suggested may be introduced is roll out of community car scheme in the evenings. Community Cars are a valuable source of transport for many passengers in rural areas. Many of the drivers are volunteers working tirelessly to ensure their passengers make hospital and other medical appointments, get to do their shopping or for social outings during the day. If this scheme is to be rolled out for night time, it will need to be adequately funded and resourced.

Meals on Wheels is another vital services for many people, especially older people, in rural areas. It is more than just a meal. With an ageing population and with a shift to develop primary care services and treating people in communities, there are opportunities for Meals on Wheels to play a valuable role to allow people remain in their home and their community as they age.

This information briefing is an opportunity for TD’s and Senators to speak with providers of these services and to hear the challenges they are encountering on the ground.

The briefing will be held in the Georgian Suite in Buswells Hotel from 11am-2.30pm with presentations by Irish Rural Link, Local Link Transport provider and Meals on Wheels.

Ends

**For further information, please contact (anytime):**

Seamus Boland (Chief Executive) 0862491153 or Louise Lennon (Policy and Communications Officer) 0861069244

**About Irish Rural Link:**

Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of over 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level