LABOUR

5G

While we don't have a fully developed policy on 5G, below is a rough guide on the Labour position:

- 5G (fifth generation mobile network) promises to be much faster, more reliable and generally better than the 4G, 3G, etc. that preceded it.

- One of the big technology changes with 5G is the "Internet of things", with cars, ovens, washing machines, home lighting and much more all on the network. At its most basic, it means using your phone to turn on the heat in your home just before you arrive or to put on a wash at the right time. But industry can do much more.

- A lot of the regulation of 5G will be developed at EU level. The EU estimates that 5G deployment could create 2.3 million jobs across the EU, directly and indirectly. A roll-out of 2020 is planned. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170529IPR76236/digital-europe-opportunities-for-industry-conditions-for-the-gigabit-society

- Some scientists and health professionals are concerned about the large increase in involuntary exposure to electromagnetic radiation that 5G may bring about. Some pilot programmes for 5G are on pause, awaiting further study of this issue. Labour supports rigorous testing by public and independent laboratories not connected to the telecoms industry. https://www.jrseco.com/european-union-5g-appeal-scientists-warn-of-potential-serious-health-effects-of-5g/

- Former minister Naughten announced at end-2016 that Ireland would be the first country to roll out 5G with the auction of the 700MHz spectrum in 2019.

- Subject to safety testing, Labour welcomes the opportunity to create jobs based on 5G. Ireland's 1% of the EU population could gain 23,000 jobs from 5G (if we got 1% of the estimated jobs that could be created).

- Labour also cautions that many areas have poor mobile phone reception, let alone data. So, investment and public service obligations are needed to ensure mobile operators are providing a service to more and more people in Ireland, regardless of 5G. A strong, general public service obligation should be a condition attached to any 5G licences granted.

- 5G could be part of the solution to Ireland's rural broadband needs. Further to bringing fibre to towns, and along rural roads, 5G technology could be used to bridge the final gap between cable and people's homes and businesses, when these are spread out across an area.

- The State should explore the option of owning the 5G network infrastructure, especially with potential cybersecurity concerns about the use of 5G to "hack" not only people's communications but the devices in their homes.