Under-pressure Eir claims it is addressing 'appalling' customer care problems

Charlie Weston

TELECOMS provider Eir has insisted that steps it has taken to improve its customer care are working after TDs described its service as "appalling".

The under-pressure company said it has now reduced consumer phone call waiting times to 10 minutes.

Consumers had complained it can take more than an hour to get through to the company.

Communications Minister Eamon Ryan said recently the telecom group's customer service was "totally unsatisfactory and unsettling the company is going to have to address".

He said regulator ComReg would have to take action to tackle Eir's "shocking poor performance".

Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghaíl said Eir's service was "appalling" and raised "profound questions as to whether ComReg is doing its job". Customers have been hugely frustrated when trying to contact the utility's customer care staff to report faults, switch mobile phone Sim cards, or move provider.

There have also been complaints that calls are dropped, customer agents are rude or unhelpful and that routine issues are left unresolved.

Eir is the largest telecoms operator in the State, with 1.1 million mobile customers, many with its new low-priced provider GoMo, and close to a million broadband customers.

The firm, controlled by French billionaire Xavier Niel and his Iliad telecoms business, made operating profits of €222m in the three months to the end of September.

An Eir spokesperson said resolving care wait times is its main priority.

"The average wait time for care in the last week was under 10 minutes and, while this is not where it should be, we are making steady progress and we wish to apologise for the delays some customers have experienced" the spokesperson said.

He added that the pandemic had made managing its call centres in Sligo, Limerick and Cork challenging, with more than 400 care agents forced to work from home overnight.

Eir has also seen a dramatic increase in call volumes due to more households working and learning from home, the spokesperson said.

The company has added 93 people to its care team since the summer, with more set to join in the coming weeks.

"Hiring and training new staff safely under Covid restrictions is challenging and does take time, but these changes have already led to reductions in call wait times," Eir said.

The regulator, ComReg, said it has sought a remediation plan from Eir.

Comhairle Chontae Átha Cliath Theas
South Dublin County Council

Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

AN BORD PLEANÁLA
SIGNIFICANT FURTHER INFORMATION

NOTICE PURSUANT TO Section 175(5)(d) and Section 177AE(5)(d) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

South Dublin County Council and Dublin City Council give notice that they have furnished significant further information to An Bord Pleanála in respect of a planning application for the **River Poddle Flood Alleviation Scheme** (application register reference number ABP-306725-20).

The proposed scheme consists of flood protection works along and adjacent to the River Poddle in the townlands of:

- Tymon North, Whitehall, Perrystown, Templeogue, Kimmage (pt. Rathfarnham C.P.) and Kimmage (pt. Crumlin C.P.) in the administrative area of South Dublin County Council
- Kimmage (pt. Rathfarnham C.P.), Kimmage (pt. Crumlin C.P.), Terenure, Dolphin's Barn, Portobello, Clanbrassil, Harolds Cross, Fairgreen, Argyle, Harrington Street, Heytesbury, Merchant's Quay in the administrative area of Dublin City Council.

The significant further information, including a revised Natura Impact Statement, may be inspected free of charge or purchased on payment of a specified fee (which fee shall not exceed the reasonable cost of making such copy) during public opening hours* for a period of five weeks and thirteen days commencing on the **20th November 2020** at the following locations:

1. South Dublin County Council offices, County Hall, Belgard Square North, Tallaght, Dublin 24 between the hours of **9:00 am to 5:00 pm on working days from 20th November 2020 to 7th January 2021 (inclusive).** For appointment please ring 01-4149000.
2. Dublin City Council Civic Offices, Wood Quay, Dublin 8, between the hours of **9:00 am and 4:30 pm on working days from 20th November 2020 to 7th January 2021 (inclusive).** For appointment please ring 01-2222160.
3. The offices of An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 between the hours of **9:15 am and 5:30 pm on working days from 20th November 2020 to 7th January 2021 (inclusive).**

*subject to Covid-19 measures, it may be necessary to make an appointment in advance to attend the offices of South Dublin County Council and Dublin City Council.

The significant further information may be viewed/downloaded on the following websites: **www.poddlefas.ie** and **https://consult.sdublincoco.ie/**.

Submissions or observations may be made in writing to An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 during the above-mentioned period relating to:

i. the implications of the proposed development, if carried out, for proper planning and sustainable development in the area or areas concerned;
ii. the likely effects on the environment, if carried out, and
iii. the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European site.

Any submissions or observations must be accompanied by a fee of €50 (except in the case of certain prescribed bodies, and except in the case of a person or body who has already made a submission or observation) and must be received by the Board **no later than 5:30 pm on 7th January 2021.**

Such submissions or observations must also include the following information:

a. the name of the person, authority or body making the submission or observation, the name of the person, if any, acting on behalf of that person, authority or body, and the address to which any correspondence relating to the application should be sent;
b. the subject matter of the submission or observation; and
c. the reasons, considerations and arguments on which the submission or observation is or are based.

Any submissions or observations which do not comply with the above requirements cannot be considered by the Board. A submission or observation duly made will be considered by An Bord Pleanála in making a decision on the application.

It is at the absolute discretion of the Board whether to hold an oral hearing on the case.

The Board may in respect of an application for permission decide to

a (i) grant the permission, or

(ii) make such modifications to the proposed development as it specifies in its decision and grant permission in respect of the proposed development as so modified, or

(iii) grant permission in respect of part of the proposed development (with or without specified modifications of it of the foregoing kind),

and any of the above decisions may be subject to or without conditions, or

b refuse to grant the permission.

A person may question the validity of a decision of An Bord Pleanála by way of an application for judicial review, under Order 84 of the Rule of the Superior Courts (S.I. No. 15 of 1986, as amended). Practical information on the review mechanism can be accessed on the Board's website at www.pleanala.ie under the heading 'Information on Cases / Weekly lists – Judicial review of planning decisions' or on the Citizens Information Service website www.citizensinformation.ie.

Any enquiries relating to the application process should be directed to the Strategic Infrastructure Section of An Bord Pleanála (Telephone: 01 858 8100).

Date of notice – 19th November 2020

www.sdcc.ie

Man arrested in connection with the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings

Gillian Halliday and Richard Vernalls

A 65-YEAR-OLD man has been arrested in Belfast in connection with the murders of 21 people in the 1974 pub bombings in Birmingham.

The arrest comes just days before the 46th anniversary of the two deadly November 21 blasts which ripped apart the Mulberry Bush and Tavern in the Town pubs.

It is understood the man arrested is Michael Patrick Reilly, who was named in a 2018 TV documentary as one of two main suspects in the bombings.

At the time, a solicitor for Mr Reilly, who has other unrelated terror convictions, strongly denied any involvement in the Birmingham attacks, describing the allegations as "untrue and without any foundation".

A former British soldier who has since died, James Francis Gavin, was also named in the documentary.

The suspect arrested yesterday was detained under the Terrorism Act. It is understood a search by officers of a property in south Belfast throughout yesterday is the same address where the suspect was detained earlier in connection with the blasts.

Julie Hambleton, whose 18-year-old sister Maxine died in the bombings, said the arrest was "the most monumental event" in the criminal investigation into the bombings since the quashing of the convictions of the Birmingham Six in 1991.

When she was telephoned by a senior West Midlands Police officer with news of the arrest, she broke down in tears.

Police search a Belfast house

"I couldn't speak. I was just inconsolable and was just looking at the picture of Maxine," she said.

"It's welcome news. It's overwhelming news."

Ms Hambleton, who is part of campaign group Justice for the 21, said: "It's something we have waited a long time for.

"Having this development – whatever happens – does not in any way lessen our desire for a full public inquiry to be held.

"There are wider issues which need to be examined and so much that went wrong, like why six men were arrested for a crime they didn't commit."

Ms Hambleton added: "The fact is we have had to beg and campaign and give up our lives as we knew them to fight for justice.

"Justice that was never facilitated by the authorities whose job it was to do so."

In April last year, an inquest jury found a botched IRA warning call led to the deaths of 21 people unlawfully killed in the atrocity.

A flawed investigation by West Midlands Police led to the wrongful convictions of the Birmingham Six.