

Simon Coveney,

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

Denis Naughton,

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Heather Humphries,

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Damian English,

Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal

Dear Ministers,

Thank you in advance for reviewing this correspondence.

Whilst I do not doubt the efforts by yourselves and your departments on the very important issues of reducing homelessness & the decline in rural Ireland and that these efforts are made with best intentions, I do not understand why one of the more immediate options available to you all in Government is not being utilised and acted upon.

Teleworking or Tele-Commuting is a widespread and proven method of working throughout the UK, Europe and the US. It allows staff to remote onto their company systems, and then function in the same manner as those employee's who are geographically located in the office.

If a package of measures were to be examined and introduced along the lines of those below, I have no doubt that two significant events would occur in a very short timeframe:

1. Homes within major urban centres would open for rental/ownership as teleworkers began moving out. This will be much faster than building new homes.
2. Towns and villages across Ireland would benefit from new, well paid "jobs" in those areas. After all its not about location of the office, its the location of the staff that drives other local businesses.

A number of factors which could assist Teleworking, and are within your immediate gift to complete, are amongst the following:

- Legislation to provide Teleworking security to both the Employer and Employee
 - For the Employer, the ability to revoke & remove access should there be a drop in productivity.
 - For the Employee, the ability to plan long term on living away from the place of work without that position being at the whim of management.
- If an employee is currently employed in an office, but is now teleworking for greater than 2 days per week, a tax rebate on Corporation Tax paid could be introduced per employee to Companies. This is a direct bottom line initiative that every Company CEO understands.
- Detail to Employers the costs saved with not having staff in the office directly e.g. commercial rent, heating, floor space, canteen etc.
- A tax clawback on hardware/software/third-party costs (if third party EU based), for opening up secure lines of communication to internal company systems.

- For staff, encourage Tax-Saver to introduce rail and bus tickets that can be purchased for particular days of the week.
- Similar to Bike to Work, a Computer for Work scheme for those who are teleworking.
- Produce figures detailing the cost savings to employees of teleworking. This would include rent/mortgage, fuel, creche, "time", etc.

With respect to broadband, not every home has sufficient speed so there are other measures which could assist. Many office buildings exist, unoccupied, throughout the towns and villages of rural Ireland with access to high speed broadband services. These could be turned into day office's for tele-workers with only heat, electricity and broadband supplied to its occupants who would pay to support the facility. Any costs should still be cheaper than long distance commutes!

Finally, and for the politicians, it should be feasible that where there are teleworkers, Companies would need to give details of that telework location as part of Revenue returns for Corporation Tax rebates. These general statistics should, in turn, be available for public review. This means that politicians can review exactly how many full time jobs they have re-directed to a constituency. They can show, with stats, where teleworking ranks on the list of employers in their area, jobs they are directly responsible for moving to that area.

To the tele-workers themselves, they will have saved thousands of euros on housing, thousands on travel plus time given back with families. Teleworkers are voters and I would trust they would repay this type of policy at the ballot box.

I would encourage you all to start the debate on teleworking. Please encourage your civil servants to cost it or aspects of it. This is not a policy that someone else has trumpeted. This is yours. Not every town or village needs or will get an IDA sourced and funded external company providing jobs. They need their own local people back working in the area, regardless of where their actual job is.

Should there be any official government policy or white paper on teleworking, I would be delighted if you could forward me the link to it.

Yours Sincerely,

Shane Cooney.

