For immediate release

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IE Domain Registry launches 2019 Digital Town initiative to combat low rates of e-commerce and digital uptake in Irish towns

While Ireland's e-commerce economy is worth €12.3bn, only 3 in 10 SMEs can take sales orders through their website – survey of 1,000 SMEs[1]

- **Sligo Town chosen as Ireland's second 'Digital Town' for its efforts in creating a truly digital community**
- **IE Domain Registry reports 18.6% growth in new domain registrations in Sligo in 2018**
- **As part of the Digital Town initiative, IE Domain Registry will plan and oversee a number of digital activities aimed at further developing digital skills for local businesses, citizens, and community groups in Sligo**
- **Insights show that the use of digital technology has a positive impact on citizens' lives**

IE Domain Registry, the company that manages and maintains Ireland's country domain, .ie, has today launched its 'Digital Town' initiative for the second year running.

Sligo has been selected as this year's Digital Town. Pioneered and led by IE Domain Registry, the Digital Town initiative seeks to highlight the economic, social and cultural benefits of the internet to towns across the country, and to ensure SMEs and local economies are realising the full potential of digital technology, particularly e-commerce.

Sligo has been chosen for its achievements in cultivating a truly digital environment in the town, and for its ongoing success in fully embracing digital for its residents and local businesses. IE Domain Registry believes that in showcasing Sligo's efforts, it can inspire other Irish towns to begin their journey to becoming fully digital.

Gorey was chosen as Ireland's Digital Town 2018.

Bringing local towns online

Findings from IE Domain Registry's SME Digital Health Index 2018—research conducted among 1,000 SMEs—show that Irish SMEs are not maximising their full e-commerce potential. Ireland's e-commerce economy is worth €12.3 billion, but just 3 in 10 SMEs (30%) can take sales orders, and even fewer can actually process payments for transactions through their website (26%). Almost two-thirds (61%) of SMEs do not promote their services online and just 1 in 10 SMEs have taken part in a digital skills training or business funding programme.

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[1] Source: IE Domain Registry SME Digital Health Index 2018 https://www.iedr.ie/uploads/IE-Domain-Registry-SME-Digital-Health-Index-2018.pdf

In 2018, there were approximately 254,929 SMEs and micro-businesses in Ireland, accounting for 99.8% of total enterprises.[2] IE Domain Registry research shows that each of these businesses stand to lose up to €25,761 a year on average if they do not have a website.

Digital technology can bring benefits to all sections of a town: businesses, community groups, and citizens. It can transform the delivery of public services, making it possible to do more with the same available resources, and enhance workplace productivity, allowing employees to work remotely from anywhere.

From a social perspective, connecting people through digital technology fosters a sense of community and positivity. Research shows that 78% feel more connected and 80% feel happier when using digital technology.[3]

Sligo – Digital Town 2019

Sligo has already made significant strides in cultivating and encouraging digital transformation.

Over the next two months, IE Domain Registry—working with Sligo County Council, Sligo Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Sligo Business Improvement District (BID), Sligo IT and tech co-working space The Building Block—will plan and oversee a number of initiatives aimed at showcasing Sligo and developing additional digital skills and know-how for the people and organisations of the town.

This work will culminate in the official celebration of Ireland's Digital Town 2019 in Sligo town centre on 14 October.

Domain registrations are seen as a forward indicator of economic activity. IE Domain Registry data shows 18.6% growth in new .ie domain registrations in Sligo in 2018. Sligo commands a 1.07% share of the total .ie domain database.

Quotes

Commenting today, David Curtin, Chief Executive of IE Domain Registry, said: "We are delighted to select Sligo as Ireland's Digital Town 2019, a town that is actively embracing digital and internet in all its forms.

"Sligo has made significant advances in cultivating a strong digital environment in the town. The arrival of high-speed broadband has stimulated a significant increase in digital activity and has allowed businesses and citizens to reap the benefits of the internet for their business, community group or local service.

"This includes the establishment of not one, but two tech co-working spaces, The Building Block and The Landing Space. The ambition of Sligo County Council, Sligo Chamber of Commerce, Sligo IT and Sligo BID for the town has really driven its digital growth and accelerated many other projects to develop the local digital economy.

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[2] Source: SBA Fact Sheet 2017 https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/2017-SBA-Fact-Sheet.pdf
[3] Source: Virgin Media Ireland Digital Insights Report
https://www.virginmedia.ie/pdf/VM_IE_Digital_Insights_Report.pdf

"With more and more consumers shopping online in an e-commerce market worth €12.3 billion in Ireland, it is important that Irish businesses have the capacity and necessary digital skills to sell their products and services online.

"IE Domain Registry, through our OPTIMISE programme, is already helping Irish SMEs grow their online presence and improve their e-commerce capabilities. Through the Digital Town initiative, we plan to apply this know-how and tangibly demonstrate the benefits of the internet to businesses, communities, and citizens in towns across Ireland.

"We expect to build on this work and highlight the benefits of the internet to the whole town of Sligo, improving citizens' ability to engage with local businesses, community groups and local government services, enhancing the strong community spirit and creating a truly digital town."

ENDS

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About IE Domain Registry

IE Domain Registry is the national registry for .ie domain names and is responsible for the management and administration of Ireland's official internet domain, .ie, in the interest of the Irish and global internet communities. It operates the domain name system (DNS) for the .ie namespace, facilitates an independent dispute resolution service and operates a public WHOIS lookup service for .ie domains. The company's mission is to provide unique, identifiably Irish domain names, along with registry and related services to the local and international internet community.

Policy development for the .ie namespace follows a bottom-up, consensus-driven approach, through a multi-stakeholder Policy Advisory Committee. It is committed to being a digital advocate for the SME community. Through the OPTIMISE Programme and stakeholder engagement initiatives, such as Digital Town, the company works with, and supports, SMEs to improve their online presence and e-commerce capabilities. IE Domain Registry produces fact-based research for the business community and policymakers, such as the annual SME Digital Health Index, which provides key insights into the digital health of SMEs. The company is focused on providing excellence in customer service through its ongoing customer experience (CX) innovation and improvement programmes. Since March 2018, it is now easier and faster to register a .ie domain name. Based in Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, IE Domain Registry employs 22 people.

About Digital Town

Now in its second year, the 'Digital Town' initiative promotes awareness, knowledge, use and understanding of the internet in Ireland by its citizens, businesses and communities. It also highlights the benefits and possibilities of the internet and celebrates the digital achievements of a local town.

Sligo has been chosen for its ongoing efforts in cultivating a truly digital environment, and for its success in embracing digital for its citizens and local businesses.

Through showcasing the efforts undertaken in Sligo and demonstrating the tangible benefits to towns of making a shift towards digitisation, it is hoped that Sligo can inspire other Irish towns to take practical steps towards becoming fully digital.

In 2018, Gorey, Co. Wexford was selected as Ireland's first 'Digital Town'.