



The people of Ennis, Telecom Eireann's Information Age Town

16th November 1998

The people of Ennis, Telecom Eireann's Information Age Town, took their first step towards a cashless society today with the launch of Ireland's first electronic purse trial by Bank of Ireland, AIB Bank and Telecom Eireann. The people of Ennis can now pay for newspapers, car parking, public telephone calls and a range of other small value purchases using the new electronic purse rather than the change in their pockets. Visa Cash, the electronic purse product offered by Visa International, was selected for the Ennis trial.

The Visa Cash electronic purse is a smartcard similar to the Telecom Eireann CallCard, but with a number of extra functions. It can be used in a wide range of outlets such as newsagents, coffee shops, bakeries, car parks and Telecom Eireann Cardphones. In addition, the UDC parking 'pay & display' machines and Telecom Eireann Cardphones have been upgraded to accept Visa Cash. It stores monetary value (rather than CallCard units) and is designed for low value purchases, typically under £5.

The electronic purse is also reusable. Customers can reload their cards with up to £50 from their AIB or Bank of Ireland accounts using any one of a number of self-service loading machines located throughout the town.

Early next year, Telecom Eireann will distribute personal loading devices to residential customers so that people can load their cards from their own home phones. Customers can check their electronic purse balance at every retailer terminal, at the loading devices, or by using a small handheld balance reader.

Some 10,000 personal customers of the two banks can avail of the new Visa Cash card, which can be used in 300 retail outlets in the town.

To obtain the card, customers simply call into their local Bank of Ireland or AIB Bank branch and load up to £50 directly from their account. There is no charge for the card or for using it for purchases. The cost of reloading corresponds with a normal electronic transaction.

Bank of Ireland, AIB and Telecom Eireann chose Ennis as the trial location for the electronic purse because of its status as the Telecom Eireann Information Age Town. Ennis is seen as an ideal location to test the concept of electronic purse in the Irish market as residents have proven themselves to be open to new technological developments. The purpose of the Ennis trial is threefold: to test customer attitudes towards electronic purse; to gauge retailer reaction and to assess the commercial viability of electronic purse.

'Visa Cash is targeted at customers across the board' said Paddy Byrne, Head of Payments and Electronic Banking Services at Bank of Ireland. 'We believe it will provide convenience to customers by offering them an electronic alternative to small, every day cash payments, where credit cards or Laser would not normally be used. In addition, smart cards will play an important role in the emerging areas such as home banking and mobile telephony. We see

smart card technology as the way forward for all our card products, and we are delighted to be working with Telecom Eireann, AIB, and Visa on this exciting project.'

'This trial is an opportunity for us to test the market demand and the technical logistics of introducing electronic purse,' said Frank Doherty, Project Manager, AIB Bank. 'We will monitor usage both in terms of how much people decide to load onto the cards as well as the frequency of use.'

Gerard Van Velzen, managing director, enterprises, Telecom Eireann, said, 'Telecom Eireann is a member of the Global Chipcard Alliance and our objective is to take a leading role in the evolution of smartcard technology and to create a centre of excellence here in Ireland. A key area of involvement for the company will be the use of smartcards as a secure access and payment mechanism for telecommunications services, including electronic commerce. The electronic purse is another first for the town of Ennis and another significant step forward in the Telecom Eireann Information Age Town project.'

Ends.