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INFRALINK CASE STUDY

Forestry and Land Scotland
Standardising Digital
Infrastructure Management



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba



Background

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) is responsible for managing Scotland's national forests and land. As the importance of digital connectivity increased, so did the demand for mobile network infrastructure and sites for that infrastructure to be located. Traditionally, granting land rights and leases for Mobile Network Operators' (MNO) equipment was done reactively on a case-by-case basis.

Standardisation

The UK Government initiated a programme, the Emergency Services Network, to upgrade or install the 4G mobile network to support over 300,000 frontline emergency service users. This programme alone resulted in the deployment of 50 additional masts on FLS managed property. The demand was so great that negotiating land rights and leases for operators' equipment on a case-by-case basis was no longer feasible and processes needed to be standardised.

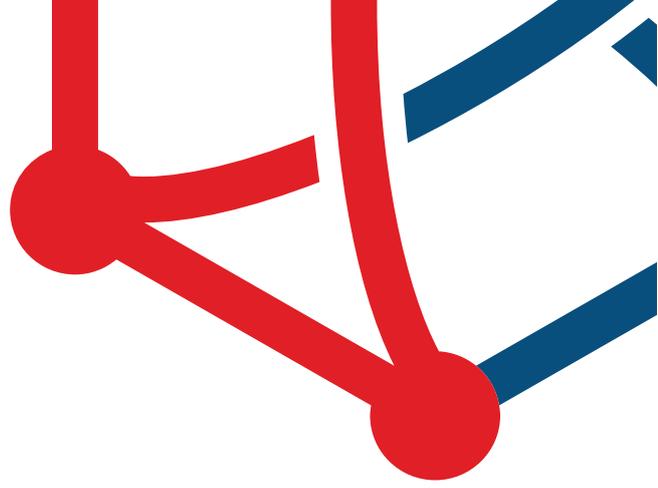
FLS recognised the need for connectivity infrastructure was only going to grow and so decided to invest time and resource to standardise the telecommunications processes and associated documentation, to save time in long-run.

Benefits

- Creating standardised processes and documentation ensured staff were giving the same consistent messages and following the same practices across FLS's five regions. The benefits the organisation, its staff and also the market.
- Having a shared understanding of the process, with no surprises, makes it more effective and efficient, especially with mobile network operators (MNOs) who are often working to contracted/regulatory deadlines.
- The time saved when negotiating MNO contracts was significant. By centralising the legal and commercial negotiations, local site discussions could be happening in parallel, reducing the time taken to identify, agree and deploy sites.
- By having a standardised approach this was able to mitigate the impact of increased demand for digital and telecommunications agreements on other areas of work.
- During a period in which FLS couldn't add staff numbers to cope with extra demand, standardisation and centralisation of technical/commercial negotiations reduced the need for specialist technical understanding of staff, as those areas had already been dealt with in the standard documentation and processes.



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What is Infralink?

The Infralink programme, led by infrastructure experts, the Scottish Futures Trust and funded by the Scotland 5G Centre, is establishing a framework that is workable at a national level, and is balanced and transparent to make the process of identifying a site for mobile digital infrastructure and agreeing the terms of the lease more efficient.

It builds off existing developments and local initiatives to set out best practice providing a basis for meaningful discussion.

The Infralink tools include

A Connectivity Marketplace - an online, map-based marketplace that publicises public sector assets that are available for digital infrastructure to be sited on.

Standard Documents - a balanced starting point removing the need to negotiate standard terms.

Payment Guidance - recommended methodology and prices to occupy/use the assets that build upon the principles of the Electronic Communications Code and recognise the impact of digital infrastructure as a tenant.

In the development of these tools, Infralink has engaged with the mobile industry and public sector organisations that have assets either in parts of Scotland or across the country. It covers rural and urban areas, land and buildings, areas of existing industry interest and new areas to support future opportunities such as the Shared Rural Network.

Benefits of Infralink

- A set of legislative compliant tools to make site identification and agreement quicker and operate more efficiently than the current process.
- Allows asset owners to put their requirements upfront so industry knows what the starting point is.
- Allows industry to plan their 4G and 5G network in an effective way knowing the location and owner of the sites.
- Using the tools will send a clear signal to the market that the organisation recognises the importance of connectivity to their area, encouraging engagement and discussion that could lead to new opportunities and investment.

“Infralink is a helping hand and should be seen as this. Adopting a standardised way of dealing with Digital Infrastructure site requests is new to lots of public sector organisations - so Infralink can provide support to help them through.”

**James Higgins, Land Agency Programme Manager
at Forestry and Land Scotland**

To find out more about Infralink please go to

infralink.scottishfuturestrust.org.uk

