

Street furniture pathfinder project secures funding to improve Scotland's digital coverage

SFT's pilot only Scottish project of eight to share £4m to simplify local authority processes to speed up 4G and 5G deployment

A pilot project across Tayside, which is aimed at greatly enhancing Scotland's mobile digital connectivity by using street furniture, has been awarded £500,000 funding from UK government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

The pathfinder aims to create a database of public sector owned assets, such as land, buildings, streetlights and CCTV, across a specified area of Scotland that would be suitable for mobile phone operators to install mobile network transmitters.

This newly-funded project follows on from the work of the Infralink programme, funded by the Scotland 5G Centre and delivered by infrastructure body the Scottish Futures Trust. Infralink is aimed at streamlining and speeding up the process of installing digital communications equipment on public sector buildings and land they own.

The pathfinder project, ***Infralink-Exchange***, will build on from this work to promote the installation of mobile transmitters, including small cells, across the Tay Cities region (Angus Council, Dundee City Council, Fife Council and Perth and Kinross Council). When fully operational it will attract the mobile industry to work with these local authorities and invest in improved mobile coverage in communities across the region.

Sarah Eynon, associate director at the Scottish Futures Trust and Infralink project director, said: "Being granted access to a robust database of public sector assets on which to install small network transmitters is a constant ask of mobile network operators seeking to improving mobile coverage.

"With the public sector having one of the biggest property portfolios, we are using our public sector infrastructure expertise to help pull together this data that includes a wide variety of assets including street furniture such as lampposts and CCTV locations.

"Over the coming months we'll collect data on public sector owned assets that are relevant to mobile phone operators' site assessment processes. This information will be hosted on a dedicated website and be used to promote the assets and the terms they can be leased on. By providing a single point of entry, standardised commercial tools and a digitised lease management tool, there will be smoother interactions between the local authorities and industry during contract negotiation.

"While we're using Tay Cities as the test site, key to success is being able to replicate the process of collecting data at scale, as well as ensuring the data is maintained and updated with minimal impact on local authority resource."

Economy Secretary Kate Forbes said: "Infralink is a project initiated by the Scottish Government and hosted by an organisation which we set up with £4 million funding – our Scotland 5G Centre.

"This latest funding award allows Infralink to accelerate its ground-breaking work and will deliver some of the aims of our 5G Strategy, including promoting better digital connectivity across the country.

PRESS RELEASE

“Infralink’s focus on reducing time and cost to the public sector and industry in reaching agreement on sites, their management and the increased speed of deployment will ultimately lead to better connectivity – everything from 4G to 5G and outdoor Wi-Fi.”

Angus Council Leader and Chair of the of Tay Cities Region Deal Board, Councillor Fairweather, said: “Tay Cities are delighted to be part of the Infralink-Exchange project that will improve digital connectivity throughout the region by working collaboratively with partners across the public, private and third sectors. Mobile connectivity offers countless benefits to individuals, communities and businesses and has become an integral part of our daily lives.

“This pilot project is an excellent opportunity to look at how engagement between forward thinking local authorities and the mobile industry can be improved using relevant data to ensure that mobile infrastructure deployment can be delivered as effectively and quickly as possible.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

[The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#)

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) helps to drive growth, enrich lives and promote Britain abroad. The DCMS protects and promotes Britain’s cultural and artistic heritage and helps businesses and communities to grow by investing in innovation and highlighting Britain as a fantastic place to visit. It helps give the UK a unique advantage on the global stage, striving for economic success.

A link to the DCMS press release is below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-plans-to-slash-red-tape-from-5g-roll-out-and-improve-mobile-phone-connectivity>

[The Scottish Futures Trust](#)

Established in 2008 by the Scottish Government as a centre of infrastructure expertise, the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) performs an active leadership role across major infrastructure programmes by bringing its unique mix of skills, experience, resource and knowledge to bear to deliver improved outcomes from Scotland’s public sector infrastructure.

[Infralink](#)

Infralink is led by the Scottish Futures Trust and is funded by the Scotland 5G Centre. It has been established to improve the engagement between potential public sector landlords and mobile industry tenants. Infralink-Exchange is being developed with the support of:

[Sitenna](#)

Sitenna is a cloud SaaS solution that connects mobile network operators with owners of real estate assets. Its platform is used to find new locations to put up towers and antennae by mapping assets and using workflows to speed up the process, enabling telecom companies to improve the process of deploying a site and reduce costs of acquisition.

[Connected Places Catapult](#)

PRESS RELEASE

Connected Places Catapult provides impartial 'innovation as a service' for mobility and built environment businesses, infrastructure providers and public institutions to catalyse step-change improvements in the way people live, work and travel.

[Improvement Service](#)

The Improvement Service was established in 2005 as the national improvement organisation for Local Government in Scotland. It was set up to deliver improvement support to help councils provide effective community leadership, strong local governance and deliver high quality, efficient local services.

[The Scotland 5G Centre](#)

The Scotland 5G Centre accelerates the deployment and adoption of 5G. It enables businesses to reap the benefits of this new technology, by bringing together entrepreneurs with a network of small businesses, larger corporates and government bodies.

[FarrPoint](#)

Farrpoint advise public and private sector organisations on the strategy, procurement and implementation of digital technology and connectivity infrastructure.
