

SFT project reaches milestone to improve mobile digital connectivity

Online platform of over 140,000 public assets where mobile network infrastructure can be installed is launched

A transformative project aimed at accelerating mobile digital connectivity across Scotland has marked a major milestone with the launch of an online platform showing locations of over 140,000 public sector land, buildings and street furniture assets where mobile network equipment can be installed.

The Infralink-Exchange platform details public sector owned assets, such as land, buildings, streetlights and CCTV, across its pilot area of the Tay Cities region (Fife, Perth & Kinross, Dundee City and Angus Councils) that would be suitable for mobile phone operators to install mobile network equipment.

Infralink-Exchange is one of eight pilot projects focused on making public assets available to speed up 4G and 5G deployment. All projects were awarded UK Government funding earlier this year.

The launch follows on from the work of the Infralink programme, established by public sector infrastructure body, the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) and funded by Scottish Government. Infralink is aimed at streamlining and speeding up the process of identifying and installing digital communications equipment on public sector buildings and land.

Sarah Eynon, programme director for Digital Infrastructure at SFT, said: “This is a significant step forward for the project because it means mobile network operators seeking to improve coverage in communities across the region can easily access the robust database of over 140,000 assets and easily find out where they can install macro and small cell equipment as well as details of potential willing landlords.

“Increasing Scotland’s connectivity is a crucial economic driver towards post-pandemic recovery and to further attracting inward investment. Key to the success of the pilot project is having a process for data identification, incorporation and management that is sustainable and can be applied across the whole of Scotland.

“We will share what we have learnt and the approach we have used, to allow others to replicate it and use it across the country to help facilitate swifter and wider adoption of 5G, and the widespread benefits this will bring.”

The asset information is hosted on Sitenna’s platform and can be used to promote the assets and the terms they can be leased on. Providing a single point of entry, standardised commercial tools and a digitised lease management tool allows smoother interactions between local authorities and industry during contract negotiation.

Angus Council Leader and Chair of the of Tay Cities Region Deal Board, Councillor Beth Whiteside, said: “The Infralink-Exchange pilot plays a key role in improving connectivity throughout the Tay Cities Region by bringing together public assets and industry to allow local citizens, businesses, and visitors to experience enhanced mobile connectivity.

PRESS RELEASE

“Our commitment to ensuring digital is at the heart of everything that we do, ensures that we will continue to deliver an inclusive economic growth, reform our public services and prepare our children for the workplace of the future.”

UK Digital Infrastructure Minister, Julia Lopez, said: "We have funded this innovative project as part of our pioneering programme to explore ways to cut red tape for telecoms firms looking to use roadside infrastructure and buildings to boost 5G coverage.

"It is just one way we're dialling up mobile coverage right across Scotland, such as the government-led Shared Rural Network which will bring fast and reliable 4G signal to hard-to-reach areas through a £1 billion investment."

Hamish MacLeod, Chief Executive of Mobile UK, said: “Connectivity is crucial to generating opportunities and driving economic growth. The Infralink programme is a pioneering initiative bringing together public assets and industry, and this milestone marks an important step in creating a streamlined process to enable quick and effective infrastructure deployment and ultimately extending mobile connectivity to more people.”

Economy Secretary, Kate Forbes, said: “The Infralink-Exchange pilot aims to invest in improved coverage across the region by streamlining processes like identifying sites, drawing up contracts and beginning onsite work. It may also help the mobile industry work with Tay Cities local authorities.

“This project, financially supported by the Scottish Government, could help create jobs while promoting prosperity and improving technology and connectivity in line with our National Strategy for Economic Transformation.”

Richard Watson, managing director of Rapier Systems, a telecoms company operating across the Tay Cities region, said: “We all need good mobile connectivity these days, not necessarily to watch TV on the go, but simply to be able to communicate with friends and family or pay bills. It really isn’t a luxury anymore, or at least it shouldn’t be.

“These days, the performance of mobile is right up there with fibre for most activities, so it simply isn’t for the less fortunate anymore. We need to make it as easy as possible to do things commercially.”

The Infralink-Exchange project was the only Scottish project of eight to be awarded a share of £4m funding earlier this year from the UK Government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

The project received £500,000 from the Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA) to explore how digital software can help simplify local authority processes when telecoms operators request access to publicly owned buildings and curb-side infrastructure.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

[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.

PRESS RELEASE

[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.

[Infralink](#)

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

[Tay Cities Region](#)

The Tay Cities Region brings together public, private and voluntary organisations in the council areas of Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth & Kinross to deliver a smarter and fairer region. A Deal was signed with UK and Scottish Governments to encourage greater investment and powers in December 2020.

[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](#)

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.
