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## SFT Outcomes 2021/22

### Demonstrating progress with impact

#### PRIMARY OUTCOME

08

**EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ASSETS  
DRIVING TRANSFORMATION  
OR ARE RE-DEPLOYED**

#### SECONDARY OUTCOMES

02

05

07



## Digital toolkit helps improve digital connectivity

When it comes to agreeing locations and terms for new and existing mobile digital infrastructure, numerous challenges are faced by the public sector and the mobile industry during negotiations.

A mixture of complexity of process and new legislation has resulted in a lack of engagement between the two sectors that is negatively impacting on the roll out of 4G and 5G.

Given local authorities are the main owner of infrastructure that can host 5G small cells, the mobile industry and local authorities need to reengage based around a set of national tools and expert, technical support.

To solve the problem, the Digital Infrastructure Team at SFT established the Infralink programme, which is funded by the Scotland 5G Centre and aims to improve engagement between the two parties.

Infralink set out to establish national tools that are workable, balanced and transparent, and provide a balanced starting point for negotiations. Those tools included:

- Standardised agreement documents – a balanced starting point removing the need to negotiate standard terms, allowing the parties to focus on the nuances relating to deploying new sites or upgrading or relocating existing ones
- Payment guidance - a recommended methodology and price structure to occupy/use the assets that builds upon the principles of the Electronic Communications Code and recognises the impact of digital infrastructure as a tenant

- A Connectivity Marketplace - an online map-based source of asset data for use by both parties to help discussions about extending coverage in an area

The Infralink tools were developed in consultation with the mobile industry and public sector organisations so they can be applied to rural and urban areas, land and buildings, areas of existing industry interest and new areas to support future opportunities. The tools built off existing best practice from across the UK and set out a basis for meaningful discussion.

The response to Infralink from industry and the public sector was positive. Infralink then formed an agreement with the Tay Cities Region (Fife, Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross Councils) to work with them to put the commercial tools and other support materials into practice. It was also the area used for the development of a connectivity marketplace minimum viable product that was tested with stakeholders yielding positive responses to the level of impact such a product could have on mobile deployment discussions.

This then led to the submission of a bid to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA) programme to be one of eight UK pilot projects to share asset data about potential mobile sites on a digital platform to advance 4G/5G macro and small cell deployment.

With SFT as the lead partner, the Tay Cities region with involvement from a number of public and private bodies, Infralink Exchange as the pilot is known, was awarded £500k. This pilot will collate sustainable data about public sector assets and explore how these can be shown on a



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platform that is useful to industry and what steps the public sector need to take to be able to negotiate and conclude agreements in a more efficient way using the platform. All findings will be captured and shared for other public bodies to learn from.

The Infralink programme has established a national framework that is workable, balanced, and transparent by utilising existing UK wide developments and setting out best practice to provide a basis for meaningful discussion. Through the work with the Tay Cities, and specifically Infralink Exchange, it will pilot this approach and these outputs in practice to get evidence on its impact on 4G/5G macro and small cell roll out.

Graham Pinfield, Smart Perth Project Officer, Perth & Kinross Council, said: "The Infralink project was instrumental in raising the awareness of and getting the Council to address the issue of telecommunications infrastructure in the area. With Infralink Exchange there is huge potential here to

revolutionise the way that the Council accounts for and makes available its assets to increase digital connectivity which is something all councils are wanting to do.

#### Partners

- Angus Council
- Dundee City Council
- Fife Council
- Perth & Kinross Council
- Improvement Service
- Local Government Digital Office
- Scotland 5G Centre
- Connected Places Catapult
- Sitenna
- FarrPoint
- Burness Paull LLP