



NET ZERO



SUSTAINABLE PLACES



INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Programme and project  
procurement and delivery  
is effective



## Life-saving services supported by Scottish Government's 4G infill programme



**F**OR many of us, having a strong mobile phone signal is part and parcel of 21st century living. But in rural, hard-to-reach parts of Scotland it acts as a vital lifeline to emergency services.

It was in 2014 when Scottish Government's Digital Directorate asked us to explore the potential to

increase mobile coverage in rural parts of Scotland as part of its overarching digital strategy.

Building on the work our Digital Connectivity team had previously been involved in (delivering a community mast pilot with the Isle of Coll Community Trust and Vodafone), the team worked with Scottish

Government in developing a new mobile programme – the Scottish 4G Infill programme (S4GI). Part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, the new £28.75m programme would seek to secure much-needed mobile coverage in rural communities across Scotland through delivery of future-proofed 4G infrastructure and services.

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**Shared Rural Network Programme**

Utilising feedback from the mobile industry, the team devised a commercial model to secure an anchor mobile network operator tenant on each mobile mast before any public sector money was paid to the contractor.

The team carried out over 100 site visits, including the assessment of business and resident needs, identifying potential site locations and radio together with transmission planning to arrive at the locations that would all go forward to procurement.

Having successfully managed the procurement and with WHP Telecoms Ltd. the appointed contractor, the team then went onto actively manage the delivery of the programme on behalf of the Scottish Government, overseeing day to day delivery issues, commercial issues and overall high-level programme stakeholder liaison.

The team also provided technical assurance resource to the programme ensuring the quality of the build as well as acting as a trusted party in stakeholder engagements. This in turn led to collaboration of the S4GI programme with the UK Government Home Office Extended Area Services programme to minimise impact in rural

areas and maximise efficiency of the rollout and coverage.

Approximately 2,200 premises (residential and business) and many thousands of individuals and tourists have benefited from the build of 55 new masts, bringing widespread availability of high quality digital connectivity from multiple mobile network operators. This has helped to reduce the digital divide in Scotland by improving the available levels of connectivity for people and communities in rural areas.

Dr Martin Beastall at Jura Medical Practice said: *"The new connectivity has delivered a hugely important boost to our day-to-day operations. Our helicopter landing site is used in the most critical situations, and so the importance of fast and reliable communication cannot be underestimated."*

*"Having access to 4G means we can operate more effectively and ensures that we have a reliable connection to communicate when we need it most. The local area is popular with walkers and hikers, so to have access to 4G in an emergency is reassuring for both our staff and the public."*

Minister for Business, Richard Lochhead, said: *"Thanks to this £28.75 million Scottish Government programme, local residents, businesses and visitors in all these communities can access 4G for the first time, enhancing how they work, communicate and access public services. Availability of 4G services also creates more opportunities for businesses in the area, helping them improve their efficiency and productivity."*

The S4GI programme has provided a head-start for the UK Government and private sector funded Shared Rural Network Programme in Scotland that will extend mobile coverage even further.