

New plans to slash red tape from 5G roll out and improve mobile phone connectivity

- Eight pilots to simplify local authority processes to speed up 4G and 5G deployment
- Telecoms firms to get easier access to public buildings and street lights, bus shelters and traffic lights in 44 English and Scottish council areas
- Comes as Project Gigabit contract bidding process opens to connect up to 187,000 hard-to-reach premises

Eight winning projects will receive a share from the £4 million 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 curbside infrastructure.

Street furniture such as road signs and CCTV poles can be used to improve 4G coverage but they are also integral to the roll out of 5G, which requires a larger number of smaller 'cell sites' – where antennas and other telecoms equipment are placed to form a network – to ensure seamless coverage and to meet surging demand for connectivity.

However, telecoms firms can often find it difficult and time consuming to acquire the information needed to verify a structure is suitable for hosting network equipment – such as its location, physical dimensions, proximity to the street or access to a power source – which is slowing down the pace of deployment.

In response, the government will invest in piloting the latest innovations in digital asset management platforms. This software will enable local councils to more easily share data mobile companies need to accelerate their roll out plans and deliver the revolutionary benefits of 4G and 5G to people and businesses.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said:

“ Everyone gets frustrated when their mobile signal is poor, particularly when patchy coverage holds up important work and social calls and makes it harder to do stuff online. That is why we are determined to get the UK the connectivity it needs by rolling out better mobile coverage as quickly as possible.

“ Currently, mobile companies are finding it difficult to get the data they need to check that a lamppost, bus shelter or public building is suitable for hosting their kit. These eight pilots will help solve this by modernising the way local authorities and operators work together in a way that ultimately delivers faster, more reliable mobile coverage for millions of people. It is

all part of our joined-up strategy to deliver world-class connectivity to every corner of our country.”

5G is the next generation of mobile internet connection and offers download speeds up to 100 times that of 4G, making mobile phones much faster and able to process ever larger amounts of data. But it is also expected to broaden the role that mobile technology plays in wider society by enabling thousands more ‘smart’ devices on the street which connect to the internet and each other.

This will pave the way for new virtual and augmented reality services and help drive the take-up of new innovations such as autonomous cars and remote healthcare technologies. And it could transform the way public services are delivered – such as energy and transport – by allowing greater real-time monitoring and responsiveness in order to reduce waste, pollution or congestion.

Gareth Elliott, Director of Policy and Communications of Mobile UK, said:

“ Reducing the time it takes to deploy mobile infrastructure is important to enable mobile operators to roll out 4G and 5G across the country and to meet ambitious government targets.

“ The DCIA trial and its project winners will provide positive examples of how local authorities can use technology to speed up processes and develop effective relationships with mobile operators to improve coverage for all.”

The project means communities in 44 local authority areas can expect to benefit from faster and more reliable mobile coverage sooner. It could mean there is less need for new masts which can often take longer to build and set up. If successful, the technology could be rolled out to local authorities across the UK.

The project winners are based across England and Scotland as part of the government’s mission to level up access to fast and reliable connectivity. Areas to benefit from the pilots include Angus, Dundee, Fife, Perth and Kinross in Scotland, as well as Tyneside, Sunderland, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Somerset, Dorset and several other areas across England.

It comes as the government moves ahead with plans to connect up to 187,000 rural premises via Project Gigabit – the government’s £5 billion programme to build top-of-the-range broadband infrastructure in hard-to-reach areas.

Broadband providers have been invited to submit bids for contracts worth up to £292 million to upgrade rural homes and businesses across Cumbria, Durham, Northumberland, Cambridgeshire, Dorset and Teesdale – with initial work expected to commence later this year.

The government has also [responded](#) to a call for evidence launched in March last year to better understand the demand, benefits and barriers involved in connecting the less than 100,000 premises likely to be very hard to reach with gigabit-capable broadband, where the costs and challenges of roll out become prohibitively high.

This evidence is being used to assess policy options that will address these issues, which will be announced later this year.

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Notes to Editors

- The DCIA programme will consider all types of publicly owned structures including buildings and street furniture for supporting roll out, but is particularly interested in streetlights due to their number and density.
- The eight winning DCIA projects are based across England and Scotland and will be respectively led by Dorset Council, North of Tyne Combined Authority, Scottish Futures Trust, West Berkshire Council, West London Alliance, West Midlands Combined Authority, West of England Combined Authority, West Sussex County Council.
- DCMS and the Department for Transport were jointly given £7m to fund the DCIA programme as part of HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund. DCMS is leading on delivery of the project with support and expertise from DfT.
- Full details of the winners of DCIA have been [published](#) on gov.uk
- Full details on the newly launched Project Gigabit procurements are included in the latest quarterly [update](#)
- Launched last September, the DCIA project collaborates closely with other government programmes, such as the [National Underground Asset Register](#), to ensure alignment of data models and coordination of stakeholder engagement.