

Press release: Search begins for a UK 5G city of the future

The Urban Connected Communities Project, a key part of the Industrial Strategy and the next step in the government's 5G Testbed and Trials Programme, will develop a large-scale, citywide testbed for wireless 5G infrastructure.

This will include testing how new technology can make urban communities inherently safer, greener, more efficient and more attractive places to live. It is expected the winning bid will be trialling a variety of initiatives, which could include:

- Doctors and other health care professionals using real-time video consultation and remote treatment for those less able to travel
- Making traffic jams and disjointed journeys a thing of the past through widespread use of sensors and real-time monitoring and management of traffic and public transport
- Revolutionising the way visitors experience tourist venues through the use of augmented and virtual reality technologies
- Maintenance of manufacturing assembly lines through use of robotics and augmented reality would enable millions of measurements per second to be taken to predict when parts need replacing or rerouting to improve productivity.

Digital Minister Margot James said:

This is a huge opportunity for an urban area to become the flagship of our ambitious programme to make Britain fit for the future and a world leader in 5G.

Trialling 5G at scale across an entire city is a chance to prove the economic benefits predicted from this new technology, test different methods of deployment and boost the connectivity of ordinary people working and living there.

Funding for the project will come from the £200 million assigned so far to develop 5G technologies as part of over £1bn investment in next-generation digital infrastructure, including through the £31bn National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF).

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is now seeking expressions of interest from local or combined authorities with a coverage area in the region of 500,000 people to be the public sector partner and lead the delivery of the project. Interest from large cities below 500,000 population but with very strong, clear digital leadership and vision will be considered.

As well as enhancing connectivity for residents and businesses the urban testbed will trial 5G applications across multiple sectors including public services, industry, transport, healthcare, media and entertainment, and allow different deployment models to be explored.

The project will specifically target 'pinch-points' of poor connectivity in cities, including areas of high demand such as mainline stations or city centres where heavy usage rather than a lack of signal leads to not-spots.

Robert Driver, CEO of Cambridge Wireless on behalf of UK5G said:

Following the successful launch just this week of UK5G, the new 5G innovation network for the country, we are delighted to see the government announcing such ambitious plans to fund a large scale 5G testbed within an urban environment.

This, along with the other projects being funded, will accelerate the development and adoption of 5G in the UK. We look forward to working with Government to make this a success.

The 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme forms part of the Government's Industrial Strategy, aimed at continually driving the UK's connectivity, telecommunications and digital sectors, and investing in the skills, industries and infrastructure of the future.

The NPIF is designed to bolster UK productivity, which is crucial to raising living standards. Through the NPIF, the government is investing in the vital infrastructure needed to make it easier for people to connect with others, and work remotely and flexibly.

Following a competitive process, the government expects to select a location in summer 2018. The urban project will be followed in the summer by a large-scale Rural Connected Communities Project.

ENDS

Notes For Editors

1. Expressions of interest can be made from 30 March with a closing date for applications of 5 June. DCMS will then work with the selected local authority to choose delivery partners for infrastructure and network services, who can bring the 5G technology into service and operate them through the trial period.
2. Local authorities and industry will both have the opportunity to

participate in workshops for the project commencing from the end of April 2018 and running until June 2018.

3. Earlier this month, the government announced six winning projects from across the UK to test 5G technology.
4. Also this month was the launch of UK5G, a new national innovation network dedicated to the promotion of research, collaboration and the commercial application of 5G in the UK. Interested parties can apply to join the network at www.UK5G.org.