

Rural Wales set to benefit from slice of £65 million 5G trials package

- CoCore in south east Wales one of nine winners of £35 million funding pot to help Britain unlock potential of 5G announced
- Comes as new £30 million 5G competition for sectors including creative industries launched
- Part of UK Government's continued commitment to level up infrastructure across the UK

Rural areas will benefit from a series of UK Government-funded trials to help them seize the potential of modern technology, the Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden announced today.

CoCore, a 5G testbed in south east Wales will receive £5m in UK Government funding to connect rural communities across Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent by demonstrating how 5G technology can be a force for good and open up new opportunities for businesses and citizens.

The project will provide innovative solutions in areas such as immersive tourism and farming security as key parts of the rural economy, whilst leveraging related technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things and cyber security as part of an 'innovation platform'.

A total of nine projects across Wales, England and Scotland will receive a share of £35 million from our rural and industrial 5G competitions, and a new £30 million open competition – 5G Create – will look at how 5G can create new opportunities in industries including film, TV, video games, logistics and tourism.

These new trials will help spread the benefits of technology across the country and allow the UK to grasp an early advantage by using the new applications 5G networks can enable.

This forms part of our £200 million investment in testbeds and trials across the UK to explore new ways that 5G can boost business growth and productivity, improve the lives of people in rural areas and maximise the productivity benefits of new technologies. Our innovative trials will also support the UK Government's ambition to diversify the supply chain for digital infrastructure in the UK, a key recommendation from the Supply Chain Review.

DCMS Secretary of State Oliver Dowden said:

We're determined that towns and villages in Wales aren't left behind and get the world-class 5G connectivity they need to flourish.

With £5 million of UK Government funding, CoCore will prove that rural Welsh communities can harness the power of revolutionary 5G technology to transform rural businesses like agriculture, improve the way public services are delivered and tackle loneliness.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

The UK Government is committed to eliminating the difference in connection between urban and rural areas whilst exploring innovative ways to use 5G technology to develop emerging industries, supporting our rural economy in Wales.

Today's announcement is a great opportunity for rural parts of Wales to boost the productivity and capacity of their digital infrastructure and forms a key part of our plans to build a UK which is fit for the future.

Deputy Minister for Economy Lee Waters said:

I am delighted by this investment in Wales through the Rural Connected Communities Competition. This exciting project aligns with our ambition to exploit digital connectivity and cutting edge technologies to drive new markets and enhance economic growth across Wales.

We are committed to connecting communities. Digital infrastructure and 5G connectivity are critical to providing the services needed to provide social and economic prosperity.

The true measure of success will be what we do with 5G. I look forward to seeing how this project through its innovative partners, such as Cisco, can make the most of the benefits of this technology to realise positive social and economic impact here in Wales, and beyond.

5G has speeds up to ten times faster than 4G and will greatly increase mobile capacity across the UK, meaning more people will be able to get online and find and download the content they want, without slowdown.

But 5G is about more than a speedier internet connection. It uses technology that is far more advanced than that of our current mobile networks, so as time goes on it could transform the way we interact with critical services – from energy and water, to transport and healthcare.

It will also drive the adoption of new technologies such as driverless cars, remote healthcare and the 'smart' devices we increasingly use in our homes and at work.

The £65 million package announced today includes:

- £30 million for the Rural Connected Communities (RCC) competition for seven 5G research and development projects across the UK. This includes five in England, one in Wales and one in Scotland with plans to expand into Northern Ireland. Test sites will be set up in Yorkshire, Gwent, Monmouthshire, Orkney, Wiltshire, Nottinghamshire, Dorset, Shropshire and Worcestershire.
- More than £5 million of funding will be awarded to two industrial projects, led by Ford Motor Company and Zeetta Networks, to test the benefits of using 5G to boost productivity in the manufacturing sector.
- A new £30 million open competition – 5G Create – has been launched to develop new uses for 5G in a variety of industries, including our creative sectors such as film, TV and video games. From enabling remote production to supporting the expansion of the increasingly popular world of esports, 5G has the potential to revolutionise the UK's booming creative industries.

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