

Street lamps and bus shelters to help boost 5G roll out in £4 million trial

Mobile network operators will get easier access to lampposts, bus shelters and other street furniture to speed up the roll out of next-generation, ultrafast 5G technology under a new government trial.

A £4 million competition launched today will explore ways to make it simpler and quicker for mobile companies to use publicly-owned buildings and curbside infrastructure – such as CCTV poles and traffic signals – to host 5G radio equipment.

Street furniture and buildings can be used to host 5G network equipment more cheaply, quickly and with less visual impact compared with traditional phone masts. However, network operators often find it difficult to acquire the information needed to verify that a structure is suitable, such as its location, physical dimensions, proximity to the street or access to a power source.

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

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman said:

The lampposts lining our streets have huge potential to accelerate the roll out of 5G and reduce the need to build new masts, but right now getting access to this infrastructure can be tricky.

That's why we are investing millions to help local councils and mobile companies work together more effectively to bring people the incredible benefits of faster connectivity as we level up the UK.

Hamish MacLeod, Mobile UK, said:

Mobile networks are critical to the UK's economic recovery yet deploying infrastructure on public assets has often proved difficult.

We welcome this competition aimed at breaking down these barriers and accelerating investment in 5G by piloting new digital platforms that bring together public bodies and mobile operators to make public-owned infrastructure more easily accessible.

We are committed to working closely with the DCMS and Local Authorities on this project.

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.

The [Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator \(DCIA\) project](#) is the latest in a number of measures announced by the government to level up the UK by busting the barriers holding back the roll out of lightning-fast digital connectivity, such as plans to trial running fibre broadband cables through drinking water pipes [announced](#) last month.

The government is also considering giving broadband firms access to more than a million kilometres of underground utility ducts to boost the rollout of full fibre broadband – including electricity, gas and sewer networks – and will soon respond to a [consultation](#) consultation on changing regulations to make infrastructure sharing easier.

The deadline for applications to the competition is 18 November.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Local and regional authorities are encouraged to form partnerships with industry to submit joint proposals for pilot project funds that will test the use of digital asset management platforms in different locations across the UK. On completion of the project, the government's aim is to support local authorities on the nationwide adoption of digital asset management platforms.□
- The DCIA project was a collaborative bid between DCMS and the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of the Shared Outcomes Fund. Spending Round 2019 announced £200 million for the Shared Outcomes Fund to fund pilot projects to test innovative ways of working across the public sector, with an emphasis on thorough plans for evaluation. The first round of the Shared Outcomes Fund is funding a wide range of projects that will run between 2020-21 and 2022-23. [Spending Review 2020](#) announced a further £200 million would be made available for a second round of the Shared Outcomes Fund.