Programme Summary

Background

Currently numerous challenges are being faced by the public sector and industry when interacting to agree locations and terms for new and existing digital infrastructure. A mixture of complexity of process and new legislation has resulted in a "stand-off" between the two sectors that could negatively impact 4G and in time 5G connectivity. What is needed are national tools to help the two sides reengage to reopen the discussion about improving connectivity across Scotland.

The Programme

The Infralink programme, led by Scottish Futures Trust, aims to establish a national framework that is workable, balanced and transparent. It will build off existing developments and set out best practice to provide a basis for meaningful discussion. The approach will be to:

- Increasing awareness and understanding: All parties involved in this commercial exchange need to be aware of the how improved connectivity can benefit the area that it serves, what the infrastructure will look like and its requirements, and the legislative backdrop that regulates the infrastructure and its owners. With this understanding then meaningful conversations can take place between the parties about current and future opportunities.

- Develop a framework of tools

  o The establishment of an online map-based marketplace that publicises public sector assets that are available for digital infrastructure to be sited on. It will include additional layers of information that will stimulate a discussion about connectivity between the parties.
  o Payment guidance framework setting out recommended prices to occupy/use the assets that will build upon the principles of the Electronic Communications Code
  o Standardised agreement documents that will regulate the use of the assets and remove the need to negotiate standard terms, focusing the parties on the nuances relating to deploying new sites or upgrading or relocating existing ones.

The programme team will identify and engage 8/9 public sector organisations from Scottish Government, public sector agencies and local authorities that have assets either in parts of Scotland or across the country. They will be expected to attend workshops and training, provide feedback on templates and proposals, share data for input into the asset marketplace and in return be given access to use the framework tools. Industry organisations will also be actively engaged to ensure the outputs meet their requirements. We are aiming to cover rural and urban areas, land and buildings, areas of existing industry interest and new areas to support the Shared Rural Network.

Benefits

The key benefits of delivering and using these outputs will be the reduction in complexity, faster deployment and potentially more investment in connectivity in the areas where these tools are used.

- By standardising and simplifying front-end site procedures, industry can plan their network in an effective way knowing the location, size and owner of the sites. The focus can then be about negotiating any exceptions to the standard terms rather than going through the whole process every time.
- The fact of the public sector using these tools will send a clear signal to the market that the organisation recognises the importance of connectivity to their area and their users. It will encourage engagement and discussion that could lead to new opportunities and investment.

Contacts

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