

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**



**MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY STATEMENT**

**November 2022**

**[pkc.gov.uk](http://pkc.gov.uk)**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mobile phone connectivity is now an essential part of everyday life for individuals, communities and businesses across Perth & Kinross and across the UK. It allows us to do many things such as online shopping, communicating with family and friends, manage our businesses online, access Council services, book doctor appointments or do online banking wherever we are in the world.

The Council has increased the offering of services online for residents and local businesses through <https://my.pkc.gov.uk/> and increasingly people use their mobile phones to access these and a variety of other services. Furthermore, the wider rollout of next generation of mobile technology - 5G - beyond the cities will bring faster speeds, less latency and more bandwidth so that people will be able to do more online so the need for digital connectivity will be in greater demand.

Both UK and Scottish Governments have updated their guidance on the deployment of digital infrastructure and local authorities are encouraged to consider the wider social and economic benefits for bringing connectivity to an area. The aim is to ensure people can access better broadband and mobile connectivity easily across a wide area and this will be crucial to the UK's economic recovery.

This policy document updates and broadens the Council's policy on telecommunications set by the Council over 20 years ago. It covers national policy in terms of the relatively recent Electronic Communications Code (ECC) and changes favouring the presumption of approval for telecommunications masts and associated permitted development rights in planning. It also reviews the existing telecommunications masts on Council owned land and the associated lease agreements.

It also outlines the proposals for new 4G masts in Perth & Kinross proposed under the UK Shared Rural Network (SRN) project. Finally, it covers the Councils involvement in the Scottish Futures Trust 'Infralink' project and the UK Government DCMS supported Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA) - the so called 'Infralink Exchange' project - on use of council assets for telecommunications infrastructure and the arrangements the Council needs to put in place to support the roll out of mobile networks both in terms of 'macro' sites i.e., masts and 'micro' sites i.e., small cells mounted on buildings and street furniture.

This marks an approach to telecommunications for the Council that is positive and proactive in encouraging better digital connectivity in Perth & Kinross whilst still being mindful of concerns over the siting of telecommunications equipment for environment and health reasons. Overall, the Council recognises the benefits that enhanced connectivity it will bring to residents and businesses in the area to improve quality of life, deliver better services, promote economic prosperity, and avoid digital exclusion especially in our rural communities.

## **NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT**

Mobile and fixed fibre connectivity will underpin the success of all local economies in the future. The UK Government is committed to providing 85% full fibre coverage by 2025 and wants to see the majority of the UK covered by 5G networks by 2027. About 9% of the UK still has no access to 4G networks from any providers, although a higher figure in Scotland where its nearer 19% because of the more rural terrain.

The Council is improving the fibre connectivity across Perth & Kinross by supporting UK and Scottish Government broadband interventions and has built a full-fibre network (i.e. Fibre optic cable direct to the home) to most of the Councils buildings. The development of mobile networks however has received

much less attention; although the Council can have a big influence on how mobile networks get built, from both a planning and strategic economic development perspective.

Mobile networks are an essential national infrastructure but are ultimately delivered locally: Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and local government working together are essential if 4G and 5G connectivity is to be available to as many people and businesses as possible, with all the benefits that this can bring especially to rural populations. Following the pandemic, with many more people and businesses now working from home, digital connectivity is essential to home and family life and to build thriving businesses.

### **Current Council Policy on Telecommunications Equipment on Council Premises**

The Council's current telecommunications policy was approved in November 2001 (Strategic Policy & Resources Committee 21 November 2001 – Policy and Telecommunications Equipment on Council Premises Report No. 01/758) however the Electronic Communications Code (the Code), which came into force across the UK in December 2017 now necessitates that this policy should be reviewed and updated, as it brings a significant change to the law in this area, allowing for the siting of masts and associated infrastructure under permitted development, except in specially designated areas.

The 2001 Council policy updated the policy originally set in 1997 which then restricted installation of telecommunications masts on Council properties due primarily to health concerns. The Committee agreed in 2001 however to remove the moratorium on siting of equipment but to continue to take a precautionary approach essentially avoiding properties in continuous educational, public or staff use, and extending to power and signal cables where they served telecoms developments adjacent to Council properties.

It should be noted that the 2001 Council policy related specifically to the siting of telecommunications equipment on land owned by the Council or adjacent to Council premises however this new policy is concerned about the overall deployment of telecommunications equipment across Perth & Kinross in terms of masts on land and small cells on buildings or street furniture.

Twenty years ago, there were only a few telecoms masts in Perth & Kinross – one on the Canal St car park and one at Callersfontain Hill in Perth. There are now five existing mast sites on Council owned land for which the Council receives a rental income, and many other masts on private land owned and operated by the four main Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) or their partner companies such as Arqiva and Wireless Infrastructure Group that operate many mast sites for the operators.

There are potentially up to thirty masts to be deployed over the coming years in Perth and Kinross as part of industry and UK Government funded upgrades to existing Mobile Network Operator (MNO) sites to alleviate 'partial not-spot' (PNS) areas that only receive coverage from at least one but not all operators and 'total not-spot' (TNS) areas where there is no coverage at all from any operator.

The UK Shared Rural Network, which is a UK Government initiative to improve 4G coverage in rural areas is planning on around 17 new mast sites in Perth & Kinross for TNS areas. There are also another five masts being built as part of the UK Home Office Emergency Services Network (ESN) Extended Area Service which is available only to the emergency services. The remainder are MNO funded masts for PNS areas. The mobile industry is looking to increase coverage and capacity of the 4G roll-out and it is likely that the pace of 5G roll-out will then accelerate over coming years.

In addition, the Scottish Government is keen to support telecommunications in terms of improving the mobile network infrastructure and is in the process of working with operators to deploy further masts across Scotland through the 4G Infill Programme. It is also supporting Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) who have developed a suite of guidance and tools through the 'Infralink' project, to help local authorities with the lease and charging agreements around the siting of telecoms equipment. The Council has participated in this Infralink initiative and have helped develop these tools and is now working with SFT and the other Tay Cities local authorities on a DCMS funded pilot - 'Infralink Exchange' - part of Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA) looking at mobile network deployment via buildings and street furniture.

## **The Electronic Communications Code (ECC)**

The legal framework underpinning rights to install and maintain electronic communications infrastructure on private and public land is contained in the Electronic Communications Code (ECC) which is part of the Communications Act 2003. The Telecommunications Code was first enacted in the Telecommunications Act 1984. In 2003 the Code was extended to cover all electronic communications and the Digital Economy Act 2017 introduced an entirely new code on 28th November 2017.

The reforms made to the Code in 2017 were intended to support faster and easier deployment, as well as encouraging industry investment in digital networks. These changes strived to balance the need for digital infrastructure with the rights and interests of landowners and other site providers. The UK Government has been keen to keep the Code updated, so that the potential economic and social benefits of fast and reliable connectivity can be realised. The Digital Government (Scottish Bodies) Regulations 2022 added Scottish Bodies to the schedules of the Digital Economy Act 2017.

Though it is relatively new, the ECC is a powerful instrument for telecommunication providers in that they can acquire 'code rights' i.e., the right to access land for the purpose of installing and maintaining equipment. Operators can acquire code rights by serving a notice on the landowner; similarly, landowners can serve notices on operators enforcing removal of the equipment, in certain circumstances. Failing agreement in either case, the parties can apply to the Lands Tribunal in Scotland for a decision.

The Council must comply with the new Code which requires public (and private) authorities to work with the telecommunications industry in the deployment of telecommunication infrastructure, equipment, and services. This does not affect statutory and legislative processes in relation to planning, road safety and closures. OFCOM still enquire, investigate, and legislate on safety standards in relation to utilities, including mobile telecommunications.

It is part of this new policy that the Council will seek to work cooperatively with telecommunications operators to find the best and most appropriate sites for equipment through dialogue and pre-application discussions.

## **Council land use planning policy**

In terms of planning policy, the Local Development Plan (2019) Policy 59 on Digital Infrastructure sets out a supportive framework, particularly for mobile communications infrastructure, and for rural areas:

*The Council will support development that provides digital and mobile communications infrastructure to homes and businesses and improves quality of life for residents and workers provided the environmental impacts on the natural and built environment are minimised. The Plan*

*is particularly supportive of the expansion of broadband and mobile communications services in rural areas.*

It does however stipulate some requirements for these developments:

*The siting and design of communication infrastructure should consider all the following series of options when selecting sites: (a) installation of smallest suitable equipment; (b) concealing/disguising masts, antennas, equipment houses; (c) site/mast sharing; (d) installation on existing building and structures; and (e) installation of ground-based masts.*

*Planning applications for communications infrastructure should address the following matters: (a) an explanation of how the proposed equipment fits into the wider network; (b) a description of the siting options (primarily for new sites) and design options which satisfy operational requirements, alternatives considered, and the reasons for the chosen solution; (c) details of the design, including height, materials and all components of the proposal; (d) details of any proposed landscaping and screen planting, where appropriate.*

These policies clearly relate most closely to 'macro' sites i.e., masts rather than 'micro' sites e.g., antennae on buildings or small cells attached to streetlights which may be more important in urban areas for 'densification' of mobile networks.

In terms of national planning policy, the Scottish Government's 2021 update to Circular 2/2015 widens the scope of permitted development rights in respect of development by Electronic Communications Code Operators. Permitted development is work that can be carried out without the need for a full formal application for planning permission. A prior notification is required whereby operators will advise the Local Authority of their intention to undertake such works and the Council has 28 days to comment. It varies limits on mast sizes, antennae sizes and numbers, and introduces new provisions for small cell systems, equipment housing cabinets, and other apparatus and equipment. This applies nationally and is aimed at bringing more of the type of development ECC Operators would like to do within the category of 'Permitted Development, for example, no need for planning application provided it is within the provisions of the specification set out in the Circular.

The Council will review and update its policies in the Local Development Plan at its next review and ensure that policies and land designations reflect the need to roll out mobile networks both in terms of macro and micro sites.

## **Economic Benefits**

There has never been a greater dependency on digital technology in human history than now. The pandemic meant that digital technologies have allowed economic activity to continue, enabling new ways to deliver education and healthcare, and allowing workers to work at home and businesses to maintain productivity. With half of the world's population using mobile internet, mobile technology has played a critical role in this. As such, governments across the globe are increasingly relying on mobile and digital technologies as a vital tool for short-term recovery, as well as for longer-term economic growth and job creation.

In this context, it is necessary for places such as Perth & Kinross to consider the role mobile and digital technologies can have on economic growth as 4G roll out completes and 5G begins to enable a new wave of economic transformation and as efforts to achieve universal internet access gather pace, especially

with the full rollout of 4G across the UK. Mobile technology has had a significant impact during the last two decades, a period which covers most of the rollout of three generations of mobile technology across the world and this will only continue.

## Health Considerations

Mobile operators in the UK design and build their masts, rooftop antennas and other installations to be compliant with the exposure guidelines in the UK that have been developed by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). These guidelines were prepared following a comprehensive assessment of all the peer-reviewed scientific literature, including thermal and non-thermal effects. The guidelines are based on evaluations of biological effects that have been established to have health consequences.

The policy set in November 2001 sought a review of the policy approved by the then Property and Information Technology Sub-Committee in 1997 which restricted the deployment of telecoms masts due to the then health concerns. At that time the Council resolved to continue to take the precautionary approach adopted in 1997, essentially avoiding properties in continuous educational, public or staff use, and extending to power and signal cables where they served telecoms developments adjacent to excepted Council properties.

The report in 2001 acknowledged that since 1997 mobile phone use had expanded to 70% of the population and this was creating a demand for more mast sites. The report also reported that the then Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones had concluded that there was no general risk to health for those living near to mast sites however it still urged a precautionary approach.

The report also outlined the positive benefits of mobile networks to business and to the Council who then becoming a major user of mobile phones. In addition, it outlined the potential revenue benefits to the Council of leasing sites for masts. It is now necessary for the Council to align itself with national policy and adopt a more positive approach to the siting of telecoms masts, whilst continuing to be mindful of impacts on the landscape and local communities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that countries adopt the ICNIRP guidelines. The WHO states that the main conclusion from its reviews is that electromagnetic fields (EMF) exposures below the limits recommended in the ICNIRP guidelines do not appear to have any known consequence on health. In the UK, Ofcom produced a report in March 2021 that tested two 5G sites in Scotland and showed the masts were all well within levels defined by ICNIRP<sup>1</sup>. As part of the process for obtaining planning consent for new 4G and 5G sites and upgrades, each operator will continue to confirm compliance with ICNIRP guidelines.

The Council should continue to exercise a precautionary approach to siting of telecommunications equipment in close juxtaposition to schools, sheltered housing, council offices or other public premises but both the technology and our understanding of the health effects of the technology have progressed significantly since 2001. So – whilst caution is still needed – the health effects to the public appear to be minimal according to the international and national agencies though research is continuing.

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<sup>1</sup> [Summary of results - EMF measurements near 5G mobile phone base stations \(ofcom.org.uk\)](https://www.ofcom.gov.uk/consult/condocs/emf/emf_2021/emf_2021_summary_of_results_-_emf_measurements_near_5g_mobile_phone_base_stations/)

## EXISTING MAST SITES ON PERTH & KINROSS LAND OR BUILDINGS

Current mast sites on Perth and Kinross land are five in total. These sites are leased to telecoms operators and are at varying stages in terms of the lease agreements. Often when the lease agreement is due for renewal or renegotiation the Council will employ a land agent with specialisms in telecommunications equipment to act for it so that the best return can be achieved.

Because of the ECC operators of these sites will seek to vary existing agreements to reflect the provisions of the Code including access, and rights to upgrade and share the apparatus. The trend recently has been for operators to only propose a modest rent for these sites which will impact upon the Councils revenue stream – although in return the area and communities will be getting better mobile connectivity. Courts will be able to impose code agreements on the landowners, and to vary existing agreements, in order to align them with the new code.

The Council will most likely need to accept a reduced revenue income from operators because of the ECC and the proliferation of masts. Also as part of the SFT Infralink project – a set of tools has been developed including lease agreements and a market oriented rate card for anticipated revenue return from the lease of sites whether rural or urban.

## THE UK SHARED RURAL NETWORK (SRN)

The Shared Rural Network (SRN) forms part of the wider mobile telecoms industry roll out of mobile networks and will help deliver reliable mobile broadband to 95% of the UK, addressing the digital divide by improving 4G coverage in the areas that need it most. Through the programme, UK's four mobile network operators (MNOs) – EE, Telefónica UK (O2), Three and Vodafone expect to provide coverage to an additional 280,000 premises and for people in cars on an additional 16,000km of the UK's roads and improve geographic coverage to Areas of Natural Beauty, National Parks and other scenic areas benefitting millions of visitors every year.

Individually, each operator will reach 90% geographic coverage, which will result in 84% of the UK having 4G coverage from all four operators, increasing choice and boosting productivity in rural areas. In Scotland, the SRN will see 4G coverage from all four operators rise to a minimum of 74%, up from 42% in 2020. In Perth & Kinross itself it is expected that coverage from all MNOs will increase from 48% to 75% and from at least one MNO will rise from 76% to 91%.

Progress against these targets will be measured by Ofcom. These improvements to mobile coverage will allow rural businesses to prosper and rural communities to thrive. Businesses will benefit from increased ease of navigation, improvements in marketing and access to documents. Visitors to remote areas of the UK will have better access to online information, boosting the UK's and the Perth & Kinross tourism industry.

The SRN programme will transform 4G coverage without duplicating infrastructure, minimising the impact on our landscape. Reaching 95% coverage will require improvements in coverage in:

- **Partial Not Spots (PNS)** – Through increased sharing of infrastructure between operators, each operator will extend its coverage footprint to 88% of the UK's landmass. This will in turn increase consumer choice. The Mobile Operators will be responsible for delivering this programme of work and will be investing over £532m. Coverage in Perth & Kinross will rise in these areas so there will be at least 91% coverage from at least one operator.



- **Total Not Spots (TNS) and Extended Area Service (EAS)** – By building new infrastructure in areas where there is currently no coverage and by upgrading the EAS network, they will take coverage from all operators to at least 90% of the UK landmass, meaning that 95% of UK landmass will have coverage from at least one operator. Coverage in Perth & Kinross will rise to 91% from at least one operator. This is funded by the UK Government.

Perth and Kinross is planned to have around 12 new privately funded mast sites for the PNS sites and around 15 publicly funded ones for the TNS sites. Perth & Kinross is one of the major beneficiaries of the SRN project because of the rurality of the area and the number of total not-spots and partial not-spots. The industry funded sites are being discussed with Cornerstone (who work on behalf of O2, Vodafone and Three) and cover areas of Highland Perthshire out to Loch Rannoch that have been notorious mobile 'not-spots' in the past, but also areas around Kenmore and out towards Stirling Council boundary. EE are not participating in this consortium but are continuing to develop their rural network independently.

These new masts and base stations will be constructed over the next 12—18 months, and the Council will manage the planning process and consider the many technical elements, such as siting/height/design that will need to be considered to deliver the infrastructure that will be needed to improve coverage in Perth and Kinross. The benefits of sharing sites will be that it is possible to maximise service provision and minimise environmental impact by minimising mast numbers.

Over time, existing 4G sites serving populated areas are likely to be upgraded to 5G. Timescales will depend on multiple factors. If the Council wishes to benefit from future 5G technology and the benefits for residents and businesses that it will bring, the Council will need to support updating and adding 4G network sites.

In urban parts of our area, mobile deployment activity will be focused on re-engineering existing sites to enhance performance (capacity and speed) to prepare for 5G. A few new sites may be required but applications and investment from telecoms operators will likely be directed at upgrades to existing sites. In rural areas there will be more focus on finding and building new sites to address the PNS and TNS coverage areas. The upgrade of existing network sites in rural, less populated areas will be lower priority, and take longer to roll out.

A future 5G network will therefore be deployed over time by a managed programme of upgrades systematically working through all existing MNO mast sites. New PNS/TNS sites will be added in remote rural areas. In future years, however small cells (much smaller devices fixed to lamp posts and other street furniture) will be added in urban areas of highest demand but could also be deployed in rural areas where there is a particular use being planned.

## **THE SCOTTISH FUTURES TRUST 'INFRALINK' PROJECT AND 'INFRALINK EXCHANGE'**

The Council is a member of the 'Infralink' programme which is led by Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) and funded by the Scottish Government. It has been established in the recognition that the current process for local authorities and the mobile telecoms sector in deploying masts and small cells is complex and resource intensive. It aims to engage with public sector property owners and telecoms providers to improve mobile connectivity by taking a national approach to streamlining and simplifying the network roll-out process.

There is an [Infralink portal](#) with access to tools and supporting documentation making the process of identifying and agreeing land and buildings that can be leased to host digital infrastructure much easier. There are four main benefits offered through the Infralink project that are Electronic Communications Code and State Aid compliant:

- a national asset register
- standardised lease agreement
- payment guidance framework
- free access to experienced technical resource

Infralink draws from existing local level projects such as West Midlands 5G Infrastructure Accelerator and Glasgow City Council's Digital Interface and Telecoms Unit. These experiences show that if the process is made simpler and more transparent this can lead to mobile network operators being attracted to work more closely with a local authority, leading to the sharing of deployment plans, additional investment, and improved connectivity. The tools will also help with stretched resources by making the offering of the Local Authority clear up-front and removing some of the repetitive elements of the process.

More recently the SFT and the Tay Cities local authorities together with a consortium of other public and industry bodies were successful in becoming a Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA). This 'Infralink Exchange' programme funded by the UK Government explores the challenges of using publicly owned land, buildings and street furniture to support digital infrastructure and roll out of advanced wireless connectivity. The focus is on:

- Accelerating deployment of digital infrastructure by improving the ability to access and acquire sites.
- Building evidence to understand the benefits and feasibility of using street furniture to host multiple technologies.

A platform is currently built and is being opened to the telecoms operators market so that all the Councils assets in terms of buildings and street furniture can be viewed.

## **USE OF COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND ASSETS**

Proposals for the installation of telecommunications equipment are often in the form of masts on land, but increasingly buildings, roofs, streetlights and street furniture and other assets are being requested. This can include cabinet boxes, wireless and satellite dishes, or 'small cells' which are cellular radio access nodes. Erecting masts, antennae or other such structures will need to comply with national planning policy Circular 2/2015 and the LDP policy. However, much of this equipment is increasingly small and can be hidden from view.

The Council has been supportive of the expansion of telecommunications networks where correctly sited, including the use of Wi-Fi and cellular communications equipment on its land, buildings and other assets. However, the Council will want to keep the numbers of radio and telecommunications mast installations to a reasonable level by using existing masts, buildings and other structures and sympathetically designing and appropriately camouflaging equipment where possible.

The Council does not have a standard 'site-share' agreement for the use of its assets but the Infralink project mentioned above provides both land and buildings based standard documents that will be utilised for this purpose.

## IMPLEMENTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN PERTH & KINROSS

Councils are instrumental in delivering both fixed fibre and mobile networks, through granting planning permission, ensuring future development is planned with mobile connectivity in mind, or providing their public assets to host mobile equipment. How local authorities interpret planning laws and street works rules, and how they design local economic strategies has a bearing on how efficiently mobile infrastructure can be deployed. In short, Councils influence the speed and cost of mobile infrastructure being built. Mobile networks should be a key priority in the digital infrastructure strategy for the area. This will require a partnership between MNOs and the Council. MNOs and local government working together is essential if 4G and 5G connectivity is to be available to as many people and businesses as possible.

There is guidance available to Councils from the mobile network operators in how to support the roll out of mobile networks<sup>2</sup>. It is the view of the MNOs that councils should think about their future mobile connectivity needs in the same way that they think about other types of essential economic infrastructure like roads, housing, utilities and even fibre broadband. Improvements to mobile technology often move faster than councils can update their local development plan policies. Some current Local Plans in the UK were published before 4G technology was even launched but mobile connectivity has become so vital now that residents and businesses have to have access to the best possible mobile connectivity in the future. The Councils own LDP policy on telecommunications is proactive and up-to-date but will be reviewed again in due course.

The Council will continue to be mindful of unintended locational consequences for residents, landowners, landscape, townscape and public health, whilst adopting a constructive approach to the siting of telecoms masts to support digital infrastructure. The Council can be pro-active and supportive in developing digital connectivity, working with the mobile industry to enable the roll out of networks that are now essential to life in our rural areas. However, the Council can still seek to avoid educational, public or staff use premises where there may be public concerns and it should also continue to minimise the impact on the landscape of masts through the planning process.

The Council will therefore put greater emphasis on mobile connectivity by implementing the following policies:

- **Assets and Leases:** The Councils assets are potential locations for mobile infrastructure. Using public buildings, structures, and open land to install mobile infrastructure has supported widespread improvements to connectivity. The charge for use of these assets should be set on the basis set out in the Electronic Communications Code and will be guided by the template lease agreements and payment guidance from the SFT Infralink and Infralink Exchange projects. The Council will prioritise the development of coverage over revenue returns from leases in the knowledge that these will diminish as a result of the ECC. Within this context leases will be agreed whilst being mindful always of health and environmental concerns.

**The Council will seek to record, manage its land, buildings, streetlights and other assets and make these available to MNOs - subject to planning, health and related considerations being satisfied - and lease sites using template agreements provided by Scottish Futures Trust Infralink project.**

- **Digital infrastructure:** The Council will learn lessons from the rollout of fixed fibre broadband particularly the recent full fibre broadband roll-out in Perth and wider Perth & Kinross. Full fibre provides the backhaul for 4G and 5G services and so the footprint now provided for fibre gigabit

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<sup>2</sup> Councils and Connectivity 2: How prepared is local government for the future of mobile? May 2019 also Mobile UK Local Authority Toolkit. [5G and Health > Local Authority Toolkit \(mobileuk.org\)](https://www.mobileuk.org/)

connectivity gives a greater opportunity to develop mobile connectivity. The Tay Cities are currently developing a strategy for digital infrastructure across the area.

**The Council will seek to develop mobile, wireless and fixed fibre networks and services in tandem, building towards world class digital connectivity for the regions residents and businesses.**

- **Collaboration with industry:** Collaboration with the mobile network industry is vital to get the connectivity that the area needs. Working across Tay Cities and with SFT, the Council will participate in regular catch-up meetings and roundtables, which support a collaborative approach between the mobile industry and local government and business.
- **The Council will continue to participate with Tay Cities local authorities, SFT (Infralink), Scotland 5G Centre, Scottish Government and others in improving links with mobile operators to improve mobile connectivity in the area.**
- **Shared Rural Network:** Over the next few years Perth & Kinross will see greatly enhanced mobile connectivity through the development of masts as part of the part UK Government supported Shared Rural Network. It will be important for the Council to engage with MNOs and their agents and representative bodies to enable the rapid and seamless development of new mast sites in the area subject to environmental and health issues being satisfied.
- **The Council will engage fully with the Shared Rural network initiative and – through dialogue and pre-application discussions – seek to enable the smooth development of new mast sites within the context of planning policy and development management procedures.**
- **Health impacts:** The Council will always assess any telecommunications development with respect to potential health risks and will have regard to exposure guidelines in the UK that have been developed by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). These guidelines were prepared following a comprehensive assessment of all the peer-reviewed scientific literature, including thermal and non-thermal effects. The guidelines are based on evaluations of biological effects that have been established to have health consequences.
- **The Council will have regard to potential health effects of telecommunications installations and will continue to exercise a precautionary approach to siting of telecommunications equipment in close juxtaposition to schools, sheltered housing, council offices or other public premises.**
- **Planning and Economic Development:** There is a need to embed pro-active mobile connectivity policies in the Local Development Plan at next review and in plans for local economic development. The development of mobile infrastructure should be a key part of the vision for any local or regional economic strategy.

**The Council will review and update its land use development plans and other policies to ensure that they reflect a positive and proactive approach to digital infrastructure.**

- **Development Management:** The Council will operate a proactive and encouraging approach to mobile connectivity whilst ensuring that health, landscape and environmental considerations are all properly considered in the planning process. The Council will seek to consider digital connectivity as a key consideration in the planning phase of new developments. Any development, from upgrades to the road network to new housing developments, should consider connectivity requirements prior to construction beginning, not after construction is complete. There should be a principal of 'dig-once' in any new development so where services are being laid fibre can be laid and other telecoms equipment installed.

**The Council will ensure that new mobile masts and related developments comply with all planning, health, landscape, and environmental considerations whilst ensuring that coverage is improved across Perth and Kinross.**

- **Single Point of Contact:** The Council will designate a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) with the responsibility to liaise with MNOs reporting into a corporate group on digital connectivity. This role will aim to make better use of mobile/ digital technology and align competing interests.

**The Council will designate a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) with the responsibility to liaise with Scottish Government, SFT, Scotland's 5G Centre and MNOs reporting into corporate groups on Smart Perth & Kinross and Digital Transformation.**