

Sunderland aiming for smart city jobs with major 5G partnership

Businesses and civic leaders in Sunderland hope a next generation 5G mobile system will help it to become a leading smart city and create more than 100 jobs.

Sunderland City Council has awarded a 20-year strategic partnership to BAI Communications to design, build and operate next generation digital infrastructure, including a private 5G small cell network.

The project follows Sunderland winning the UK Smart City of the Year 2020 title, and it is hoped that high speed 5G coverage will benefit businesses, schools and public services in the city.

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The project has been backed by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and the Government's Getting Building Fund, with hopes that it could improve the supply chain at the Nissan plant, boost connectivity in schools and allow greater use of assistive technologies for vulnerable people in the city.

Sunderland City Council chief executive Patrick Melia said: "This is an incredibly significant milestone in the development and future of Sunderland Our Smart City. We are very much looking forward to our 20-year strategic partnership with BAI, as its team helps us realise our ambitions and make our goals a reality.

"We are confident the benefits of this partnership will reach every resident, organisation and business within our city and indeed the wider area."

BAI Communications is a global communications provider and has recently signed a deal with Transport for London to improve mobile connectivity in the capital. It has also delivered projects in New York, Toronto and Hong Kong.

Billy D'Arcy, CEO of BAI Communications UK, said: "Our long-term strategic partnership with Sunderland City Council will completely transform the city, accelerating Sunderland's ambitions to become one of the UK's most advanced smart cities, connecting people, communities and businesses.

"We will leverage the power of 5G and the Internet of Things to establish a network of connectivity which will enhance employment opportunities, business efficiency and growth, helping to secure its prosperous future. Our extensive credentials delivering large-scale connected infrastructure and networking solutions position us perfectly to capitalise on the fast-growing commercial appeal of 5G enterprise solutions and smart city applications."

The 5G announcement follows recent successes in the city in beginning the regeneration of the former Vaux brewery site, and a commitment by Nissan and battery partner Envision AESC to build and power a new electric vehicle from their Sunderland plants.

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