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# SMART - NARRATIVE

The SMART investment portfolio is a cornerstone of the Dorset Living Better Investment Prospectus and aims to unlock £1 billion of investment in 10 years and transform Dorset into a 5G innovation powerhouse.

Technology and data can drive connectivity and sustainable regeneration and economic development across Dorset, improving the lives of local residents and generating value for people, businesses and places.

Over the last five years Dorset has invested around £48m in the Smart agenda, helping to roll out superfast broadband to 95% of the county and more recently accelerating gigabit (1,000 Mbps) and next generation 5G wireless broadband deployment.

There are two 5G trials underway spanning urban and rural areas. The Smart Places Pilot project has created a 5G bubble in the Lansdowne Business District in Bournemouth as part of an emerging Smart Place ecosystem that could be replicated in other cities and places around the world.

And 5G Rural Dorset has four research and development projects underway looking at how different applications of 5G can benefit rural communities and businesses, including offshore aquaculture. The aim is to make Dorset a blueprint for rural Britain about the transformative powers of 5G.

Advanced 5G connectivity is also being provided at Dorset Innovation Park to create a 5G Innovation Accelerator where local companies can collaborate and speed up the development of digital products. It will include a 5G testbed network where the defence and security industry can understand the threats and opportunities for the UK in exploiting 5G technologies.



This complements BattleLab, the Army's Defence Innovation Centre, also at Dorset Innovation Park, that will allow the Ministry of Defence to work directly with academic institutions, defence contractors, small and medium sized businesses and wider industry to develop new products and technologies which could be commercialised.

And fibre connectivity is being rolled out to 87 hub sites and around 30,000 homes across the Dorset Council area. There has also been significant investment in digital skills by upgrading technology and infrastructure at colleges and universities, including digital and creative incubation and innovation hubs.

Dorset offers investors from a range of sectors significant opportunities to increase both the accessibility and application of digital technology to benefit its economy, people and places.

## Factfile:

- Dorset Smart Place programme will unlock £1 billion of investment in the next 10 years with a potential £6bn uplift in GVA
- 8% of premises have full fibre connection (higher than the England average)
- 95% of Dorset has broadband coverage
- Employment in creative and digital companies is growing 10% faster than the UK

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# SMART INVESTMENT - SOME HIGHLIGHTS SO FAR

There have been some significant developments in recent months and a number of Dorset LEP-backed projects are coming to fruition. Highlights include:

## **Ultrafast Broadband**

**Project budget: £6.58m**

Funded by £2m Dorset LEP Growing Places Fund allocation, delivered by Dorset Council. This project is delivering fibre gigabit capable connectivity across the Enterprise Zone and BIG programme area at Aviation Park and Bournemouth Airport, as well as delivering superfast broadband solutions for business and domestic communities. It is due to be completed December 2021 and will benefit more than 3,800 properties.

## **Defence Innovation Centre (BattleLab)**

**Project budget: £5.7m**

Army-led project to create BattleLab, a Defence Innovation Centre at Dorset Innovation Park. It will include a Vodafone indoor 5G network and allow the Army to collaborate with the defence and security industry and academia on developing new and innovative technologies. Funding includes £1.5m via Dorset LEP from the Government's Local Growth Fund, £3.1m from the MOD and the balance from Dorset Council.

## **Smart Places Pilot**

**Project budget: £1.33m**

Funded by £1m Dorset LEP Local Growth Fund allocation, delivered by BCP Council. The project is creating the UK's only local authority fully owned and operated 5G testbed in the Lansdown area of Bournemouth. The project is assessing the transformative impact of 5G on businesses, communities and the delivery of public services, from transport to health and social care.

## **5G Rural Dorset [includes 5G Innovation Accelerator]**

**Project budget: £7m**

This groundbreaking DCMS-backed project continues to receive recognition, with the government announcing a new partnership between the project and Qualcomm, described as the world's leading wireless technology innovator and a driving force behind 5G. The partnership will help revolutionise the agriculture sector, including developing a 5G chip to power the first ever 5G-ready, crop-growing robots capable of uploading vast amounts of data in real time.

## **Fibre Hub Connectivity in Rural Dorset**

**Project budget: £6.46m**

Funded by £1.7m Dorset LEP Getting Building Fund allocation, delivered by Dorset Council. It is delivering enhanced digital connectivity (full fibre and wireless) across the Dorset Council spatial area, with a particular focus on rural areas where current connectivity is poor. It will increase the number of Council owned premises (e.g. schools, libraries, Council offices) as well as wider residential and commercial premises being able to access full fibre connectivity as well as improve publicly accessible wi-fi across the local authority area. More than 37,000 premises are expected to benefit and the project aims to complete by March 2022.

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# SMART INVESTMENT - SOME HIGHLIGHTS SO FAR

## Project Gigabit

The Government has confirmed that Dorset is one of just six areas of the UK to benefit from the first tranche of a £5 billion project to bring next generation gigabit broadband to hard to reach homes and businesses. An Open Market Review in March this year by Dorset Council and BDUK found that there are potentially more than 100,000 properties in Dorset that will not be reached by commercial coverage for gigabit broadband over the next three years. The Council and BDUK are currently engaged in a public review to confirm which premises will be eligible for government subsidy. This review closes on July 25 and will be followed by a tender exercise. Project Gigabit complements a range of other SMART projects.

## Smart Place Investment Plan

Funded by £380,000 Dorset LEP Local Growth Fund allocation, delivered by BCP Council. It is developing a Smart Place Investment Plan for use in discussions and negotiations with potential investors to secure inward investment of up to £1bn.

## Lansdowne Business District

Funded by £4.8m Dorset LEP Local Growth Fund allocation, delivered by BCP Council and due to be completed in September 2021. The project is developing Lansdowne into a major commercial business district through transport upgrade, public realm and digital infrastructure and complements the Smart Place Pilot.

## Innovation Studio

Funded by £1.58m Dorset LEP Local Growth Fund allocation. Arts University Bournemouth's (AUB) new Innovation Studio and Innovation Suite are expected to have an official opening once COVID-19 restrictions have been eased and will be fully operational by September 2021. They will help businesses in Dorset to research, innovate and develop their ideas and be a base for small start-ups, many of which are expected to consist of AUB graduates.

## Festival of the Future

Following last year's successful online event, Dorset Council is planning the festival for October. It aims to increase people's knowledge and understanding of what 'digital' means and to excite them about the future possibilities and benefits of technology.



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# FOCUS FOR 2021/22

Over the next 12 months a number of Smart portfolio projects and opportunities will come to fruition and create an opportunity for Dorset to cement its reputation as a testbed area, especially for urban and rural 5G applications, and in the continued development of defence technologies, medtech and aquaculture.

The LEP Board has indicated that areas of focus for the next 12 months should include defence technologies and fintech. It is important however not to lose sight of the groundbreaking work that continues around Smart Places and 5G (urban and rural), and how those activities underpin and enable R&D in other sectors.

## Defence Technologies

Dorset has a strong industry-led cluster with a growing focus on defence and security information systems and cyber-security. There is already strong engagement from the MOD and this will be strengthened further with the opening of BattleLab in August 2021 and a greater focus on technology as a result of the Defence Review. The Army has made it clear that it wants BattleLab to be a conduit to the private sector for more open and better engagement with SMEs, and aims to reach companies that have never before worked with defence. It also wants the facility to be a 'persistent challenge to the status quo to drive value and improvement'. BattleLab should be at the heart of Dorset's defencetech narrative.

## Fintech

Dorset needs to scope and define its ambitions in this sector. The region already has a well-established financial services industry and through its Smart Places pilot is starting to harness the value of 5G connectivity and data-driven solutions. Fintech occupies the space where financial services and technology collide. So too, one could argue, does Bournemouth. But what fintech businesses does the region already boast? What efforts are being made to attract them? Is there a credible proposition? The Government has

just published the [Kalifa Review of UK Fintech](#) which sets out a roadmap for the development of the industry in the UK. Some of Dorset's Investment Prospectus asks, for example the Smart Challenge Fund, Future Networks Lab Accelerator and Digital Skills Partnership, could be re-aligned to reflect Government fintech strategy objectives especially around skills and start-up support.

## Smart Places and 5G RuralDorset Pilots

The core proposition is that Dorset is a UK leader in implementing the next generation of mobile connectivity. The opportunity in 2020/21 is to focus more on the tangible benefits of that technology and real-life examples as the various trial projects start to demonstrate real outcomes. 5G RuralDorset is already doing excellent work in promoting its activities and as the Smart Places pilot and Investment Plan progress there will be more opportunities to showcase Dorset's UK-leading approach. It will be important to demonstrate publicly how Government investment (eg via DCMS, Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund) is leading to real-life impacts for communities and businesses in Dorset as part of the positioning for future investment (eg from the Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund, Shared Prosperity Fund and other sources).