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**Gateshead becomes first city in North East to benefit from free ultrafast wi-fi and phone calls**

***InLinkUK from BT: Innovative digital street units go live in Gateshead***

Gateshead has become the first city in the North East to benefit from the free InLinkUK from BT service, which already has more than 130,000 subscribers across the UK. It offers the UK's fastest free public wi-fi, plus a range of digital services, including local council and community information.

Seven InLinks are being installed around Gateshead's Trinity Square, providing ultrafast wi-fi, the fastest free public wi-fi service available in the UK. The InLinks also provide free phone calls to UK landlines and mobiles, rapid mobile device charging, the BT Phone Book app, as well as easy access to charity helplines. Gateshead is the fifth city to benefit from the new service, joining London, Leeds, Glasgow and Southampton.

The installation of InLinks mean more space on pavements, as on average, each InLink replaces two BT payphones, with 14 set to be removed in Gateshead. BT's iconic red phone boxes will remain.

The first of the fully-accessible InLinks have already gone live on High Street and West Street, with further activations expected in the coming weeks. Home to the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and The Great Exhibition of the North, Gateshead is a key visitor and tourist hub.

Gateshead and the local community are also benefiting from the digital displays on the InLinks that display real-time information, including the weather forecast and other local information. Each InLink provides more than 1,000 hours of local messaging a year, acting as a community notice board for the local area. These services are provided to the

community at no public cost, as the project is funded by advertising revenue.

Kieran Charleson, BT's regional director for North of England, said: "Today's launch in Gateshead brings the fastest free public wi-fi in the UK to the North East. Residents and visitors alike are set to benefit from this new state-of-the-art 'phone box', where they can also make calls for free, access local information and even charge their 'phone when out and about."

Matt Bird, general manager for InLinkUK, added: "The launch of our services in Gateshead comes at a time of rapid progress in the national rollout of our InLinks. We are pleased to be a part of the Digital Gateshead Strategy, which feeds directly into our mission of creating smart communities. With the InLinks offering a host of free digital services, we are well on our way to achieving this in key UK towns and cities."

The UK rollout has so far seen more than 175 InLinks installed in eight London boroughs, Leeds, Glasgow and Southampton; with hundreds more to be installed in major towns and cities across the UK. Since the first InLink was installed in June last year, more than 130,000 people have subscribed to the service's free wi-fi, using enough data to download the equivalent of more than 21 million songs. The InLinks have also saved people more than £550,000 in free calls, with 45,000 calls being made on average every week across the UK.

One of the InLink's newest features is its free one-touch lifelines to four national charities. Free calls can be made via the tablet to Childline, End Youth Homelessness, Runaway Helpline and Samaritans. The InLinks are also accessible, offering additional digital services, including for those who have sight and visual impairments.

InLinkUK from BT is a partnership between BT and tech start up InLinkUK.

### **Enquiries:**

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About InLinkUK**

InLinkUK is a new communications network that will replace over 1,000 pay phones in major cities across the UK, with new units called InLinks.

Each InLink provides ultrafast, free public wi-fi, phone calls, device charging and a tablet for access to city services, maps and directions, connecting those who visit, live and work in urban hubs across the UK.

Hundreds of users within range of an InLink will be able to access free ultrafast wi-fi on the move, with speeds of up to 1Gbps - the fastest free public wi-fi service available.

InLinkUK from BT is being brought to the UK through a joint venture between Intersection, the urban innovation company behind LinkNYC, and Primesight, a leading UK out-of-home media company, in partnership with BT.

Learn more at <http://www.inlinkuk.com>

### **BT's wi-fi network in the UK:**

BT already operates the biggest network in the UK, giving customers unlimited access to the most extensive wi-fi coverage with more than five million hotspots.

### **Images:**

For images, see [The BT Media Image library](#) and [Telefocus - historical images from BT Archives](#).

### **About BT**

BT's purpose is to use the power of communications to make a better world. It is one of the world's leading providers of communications services and solutions, serving customers in 180 countries. Its principal activities include the provision of networked IT services globally; local, national and international telecommunications services to its customers for use at home, at work and on the move; broadband, TV and internet products and services; and converged fixed-mobile products and services. BT consists of four customer-facing units: Consumer, Enterprise, Global Services and Openreach.

For the year ended 31 March 2018, BT Group's reported revenue was £23,723m with

reported profit before taxation of £2,616m.

British Telecommunications plc (BT) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of BT Group plc and encompasses virtually all businesses and assets of the BT Group. BT Group plc is listed on stock exchanges in London and New York.

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