

TechWorks Case study

Deloitte helps Scottish health authorities to reduce the delivery time of urgent medical supplies from 48 hours to 30 minutes.

Challenge

As COVID-19 testing picked up pace during 2020, isolated communities in the Scottish Highlands needed fast, efficient access to urgent medical supplies. To meet local testing requirements, staff had to distribute batches of COVID-19 testing kits and personal protective equipment between sites at regular intervals.

For the local authorities, a key challenge was sending the supplies between Lorn and Islands District General Hospital in Oban, and Mull and Iona Community Hospital in Craignure. The unforgiving terrain in the area meant that the medical supplies had to be transported via sea and road. This led to waits of up to 48 hours as supplies were transported between the two sites – despite them being just 10 miles apart.

Solution

To deliver the supplies faster, the staff at the Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership sought a technology-based solution. Teaming up with Deloitte, Vodafone and delivery drone operator Skyports, they trialled a system for delivering the supplies via remotely-piloted drones.

The drones are dispatched from the Skyports' operations centre in Argyll and Bute and fly automatically along predefined routes. NHS staff can make on-demand and scheduled requests for supplies, via a customer web interface developed by Deloitte's TechWorks team. Also, staff can track the progress of the drones via the web application.

Communication between the drone and the ground control station is provided using Vodafone's 4G network and satellite communications. This ensures that connectivity coverage is provided at all times to guarantee safety.

Impact

With the drone system in place, deliveries that previously took up to 48 hours now take only 30 minutes. The convenience of the system means staff receive consignments faster and can send them with much higher frequency.

The project, which uses mobile connectivity and space-based technology, is a perfect example of the value that drones can bring to communities. It has laid the foundations for a drone delivery operation that could be built-in healthcare facilities around the country.

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To find out more about how TechWorks could support your business, please contact me:

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“I am delighted that Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership is again at the forefront in Scotland using new technologies to benefit our patients. The use of drones provides real opportunities to improve services and will help enable quicker diagnoses for our patients.”

Joanna MacDonald, Chief Officer for Argyll, Bute Health and Social Care Partnership

