

Telecoms Trailblazers: A day in the life of Ian Smith

This campaign will spotlight the people transforming the telecoms ecosystem: if you'd like to get involved, please contact enquiries@uktin.net.

Hello, my name is Ian Smith and I am the Chief Technology Officer at Quickline Communications. I am responsible for our technological-related decisions across our customer-facing network and internal IT systems. Joining from DCMS, where I had the role of 5GTT's Programme Director, I have a real passion for 5G technology and feel very honoured to be continuing that legacy elsewhere.

Quickline provides fast, reliable broadband to rural areas, with the greatest speeds possible. Using the latest technology we help those struggling get online, going where other providers won't. Our hybrid solution facilitates fibre alongside 5G fixed wireless access technologies. I am very committed to our tagline: "no connection left behind".

Involved with the 5G test bed and trials programme from the beginning, Quickline has focused on commercialising solutions developed in the trials. As a part of these trials, where we built a mast in the most rural area of North Yorkshire, we have demonstrated the transformational impact of 5G: the project shows that 5G and Agritech can transform farming, as well as enhance tourism and improve people's connection to society.

In terms of my "average day", I deal with a broad range of corporate issues. But I do enjoy rolling my sleeves up and solving technical challenges. It is always nice to get out of the office and work with our talented engineers in the field—especially given our coverage area is across Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, an area of outstanding natural beauty. It certainly beats working in a big city.

1. What do you enjoy most about working in this space?

The people! They are fascinating, clever, motivated and genuinely inspirational.

2. What's the most ridiculous thing you've done in the name of work?

Wading across a river with an antenna on my back is definitely up there...

3. What excites you most about working in the telecoms sector?

It's forever evolving. I've been working in telecoms since the early nineties when mobile was just rolling out and wow, how things have changed. Just think about what you can do now with the data on your phone. When people ask me what I do for a living, I say, you know you're on holiday, on the beach with a margarita and you send a picture of the sun setting to your friends on Facebook, I make that happen.

4. What would you like people to know about your work?

Being an engineer in the telecom industry is absolutely fabulous. It is a fascinating place to work. Technology is always changing and evolving. Being a part of that change is incredibly special. The telecoms industry touches everybody, with the vast majority of the world needing some interaction with the digital world. Splicing fibre in the rain may not look glamorous but what it enables is absolutely life-changing.

5. Why is a vibrant, flourishing telecoms ecosystem important for the UK?

We cannot function without it. Telecoms and digital connectivity transcend across various sectors. The UK Government has digital departments now, even tax is digital. For example, if you're running a business, almost everything is done electronically and without this ecosystem and infrastructure, we cease to function. But in the UK we're also really good at innovating. We need to focus on selling our products globally and attracting inward investment to help the economy.