5G Rural Dorset – Meet the Team

Rob Maslin

Rob's official title is Design Thinker, but he considers himself more of a Service Designer. His work within the project focusses on developing agricultural technology – specifically the human desirability elements and how the technology affects humans.

"I'd say my one key skill is supporting the project team through empathy and compassion for people that might be affected by the project"

1. How long have you been working at the Catapult?

I've worked at the Catapult for about 3 years.

2. Tell us a bit about yourself/your background?

I have been a Service Designer for quite a number of years. Before joining the Catapult, I was working for myself, as a service designer with my own company. My work included some of the first design projects on the circular economy, several big and small brands as well as the Government and Cabinet office. Then I joined the Catapult and started working immediately on monitoring of mines for environmental contamination and pollution that comes from them with the use of satellites and helping support cacao farmers in Colombia. Thus, most of my career has been spent looking at the design of human centred innovations, addressing sustainability and social challenges.

3. What is your role within this project?

My role is the 5G RuralDorset Project is focused on the agricultural work package, which is WP5. The part that I'm responsible for is the human desirability elements as well as making sure that it links with the business and the technologically feasible side. And often my role in the project is to try to facilitate the process that brings all these things together.

The time I can spend on the Dorset project is quite limited, so I have to focus on prioritising particular areas I can work on. I am mainly supporting rather than doing the bulk - the detailed work - so I am really just giving some oversight and feedback on the human elements and how they affect people. I have started to understand that there are some real challenges around co-designing this with the community of people involved in the 5G Ecosystem, so I've started to look at how we ensure that 5G infrastructures as a whole actually works and supports communities.

4. What are you most looking forward to researching/achieving/demonstrating during this project?

There are a lot of amazing things that are happening on this project and I think that, just on WP5, there are a number of use cases, that we at the Catapult might even consider one project. The project is that big and that fast, there's work going on, to look at mapping fields and creating digital twins. There's really great work on putting

sensors in aqua farms on the coast. There are a lot of benefits for the community, the society and the environment from all these things. I think it can be really transformative for the communities and I'm looking to learn and understand most from my personal point of view, is how ethics playing to all of these sorts of things and concerns or different point of views people might have in making the best use of the 5G infrastructure and how they fell that this contributes to the society and to the environment.

5. **How do you see this project transforming lives/business functions?**

There are a lot of different services and use cases that are going on across the project. I think what we are doing that is important is creating the data infrastructure that offers many new potential services, beyond the ones that we are already developing. There is a potential for many more services in the future, with benefits such as increasing farm yields, reducing carbon emissions from farming, and new information that can help us protect and divert biodiversity and increase food resilience for the country. It is this infrastructure - this possibility to evolve new services and to enable new opportunities - that are going to change the UK.