

Smart City Symposium

Sunderland City Council



Patrick Melia OBE

Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council

Patrick Melia is the Chief Executive of Sunderland City Council.

He is leading Sunderland's transformation into one of the UK's most ambitious Smart Cities, introducing the UK's first 5G-ready wifi network in the city centre in 2019, and securing projects such as a £9m 5G Connected Automated Logistics scheme and a 20-year digital infrastructure partnership with BAI Communications (now Boldyn Networks). Under his leadership, Sunderland was named Smart City of the Year in the Digital Leaders 100 List, and won Connected Britain's Digital Council of the Year.

Patrick has been instrumental in shaping Sunderland's role in the electric vehicle revolution, spearheading the landmark EV36Zero partnership with Nissan and the Government. This is a £1bn Electric Vehicle hub backed by a 'Microgrid' generating 100% renewable energy. These projects place Sunderland at the forefront of low-carbon innovation, helping secure thousands of jobs and cutting carbon emissions by 55,000 tonnes annually.

Patrick is also driving a major regeneration of the city centre, with the Riverside Sunderland development set to create 10,000 jobs and 1,000 state-of-the-art low-carbon homes.

He previously held the position of Head of Paid Service for the North East Combined Authority, and played a key role in securing devolution for the North East and the formation of the North East Combined Authority. He is also a member of a number of strategic, regional and national boards, including the UK 5G Advisory Board and Local Trust.

In recognition of his services to local government, Patrick was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the King's Birthday Honours List in June 2024.

 www.linkedin.com/in/patrick-melia-obe

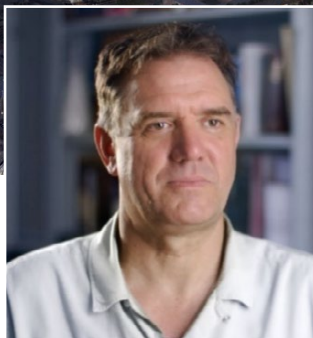
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Paul Wilson

Chair of the Advisory Board for Smart Cities World

Paul is Chair of the Advisory Board for Smart Cities World, read by over 1m people worldwide, which provides daily news coverage and weekly features about the fast-changing world of urban innovation.

Paul is also Senior Advisor at Open Agile Smart Cities and an honorary Research Fellow at the University of Bristol's Smart Internet Lab. Until recently, Paul was Chief Business Officer, Connected Places Catapult, the UK's innovation accelerator for cities, transport, and place leadership.

Paul draws on 30 years of international leadership experience across technology and city spaces. He was previously Chief Marketing Officer at Sungard, a fintech company. Prior to this, he led the first economic growth strategy for the Bristol and Bath City Region of the UK, winning £260m of Government investment.

Following this, he founded the Smart City Project, 'Bristol is Open', which won numerous international Smart City awards. He then became a founder and Board member of the Government's UK5G, following which he became TM Forum's Smart City International Adviser, and then its Chief Marketing Officer.

 www.linkedin.com/in/paul-wilson

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Liz St Louis

Director of Smart Cities at Sunderland City Council

Liz St Louis is the Director for Smart Cities at Sunderland City Council.

Liz has driven transformation programmes and digital and data initiatives throughout her career. She has a passion for person-centred user design and ensuring digital and data-enabled transformational change that makes a real and measurable difference.

Leading the delivery of the Smart City Programme for Sunderland, Liz is responsible for driving forward city-wide investment in next-generation digital infrastructure and digital and data solutions that are making a transformational difference across the city's landscape.

 www.linkedin.com/in/liz-st-louis

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boldyn
NETWORKS



Seán Keating

Chief Technology Officer at Boldyn Networks

Seán has worked on wireless networks for over 25 years.

He has delivered projects across Europe, North America, Asia and Australasia. This involved building infrastructure for mobile operators, governments, investors, real estate companies, offshore wind developers and large industries.

As Chief Technology Officer for the UK and Ireland, Seán leads an innovative technology team creating industry-leading technology for his customers, underpinning Boldyn Networks' growth ambitions.

Before Boldyn Networks' acquisition in 2021, Seán was CEO of Vilicom. In this role, Seán executed a strategy to expand the company by supporting digital transformation and launching Europe's first cloud platform to deploy mobile and private networks faster and more efficiently.

 www.linkedin.com/in/seankeating

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Richard Green

Azure Lead for Local and Regional Government at Microsoft

Richard Green is the Azure Lead for Local and Regional Government at Microsoft.

Over a 20 year career, Richard has led the teams that have helped Microsoft's customers transform their organisations with technology and innovation. Richard brings a breadth of experience built across diverse industries and segments, both in the Commercial and Public Sector.

He has been fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time within Microsoft, working on the earliest versions of products and services that evolved to become Microsoft 365 and Azure. Today Richard leads the Solutions team for Azure aligned to the UK Local and Regional Government organisations.

 www.linkedin.com/in/richjgreen

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Scott Corfe

Director of Economics at Public First

Scott is a Director in the Economics team at Public First, with over 15 years of experience in applying rigorous economic analysis to a wide range of complex issues.

He has authored influential studies on a diverse range of topics, from the case for alcohol duty reform to road pricing, as well as the changing nature of UK high streets. Scott has worked with numerous businesses and trade bodies to help them understand and quantify their socioeconomic impact.

Scott's insights have been covered in publications including The Financial Times, The Sunday Times, The Guardian and the Daily Telegraph. He has also appeared on BBC News, Sky News, Radio 4 and a range of other broadcast media.

 www.linkedin.com/in/scottcorfe/

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Professor Joanna Berry

Associate Dean: External Engagement at Durham University
Faculty of Business

Professor Joanna Berry is the Associate Dean (Engagement), and the Professor in Entrepreneurship at Durham University Business School, as well as the Director (Business Engagement) of Durham University's Durham Global Energy Institute.

Awarded the Durham University Enhancing Learning and Teaching: Digital and Online Learning Award, and Durham's Academic Tutor of the Year 2024, Joanna is also trustee and Director of the social enterprise, Acumen Community Buildings. In addition, she has been Regional Chair for the Chartered Institute of Marketing and Regional Vice-Chair for the Institute of Directors' North East and Yorkshire branch.

Joanna has a particular emphasis on supporting the 'Women in STEM' agenda in a variety of ways. She was admitted to the Northern Power Women Power List in 2020 and was recently named Ambassador for the Advanced Manufacturing Forum.

 www.linkedin.com/in/drjoannaberry

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Dr Ashmita Randhawa

Director of Research and Development at Sunderland Software City

Dr Ashmita Randhawa is a Director of Research and Development at Sunderland Software City (SSC) and co-lead for the Hartree Centre NE Hub, delivered in partnership with the National Innovation Centre for Data and Newcastle University.

She is also a Visiting Professor at Newcastle University's National Innovation Centre for Data and an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Oxford's Centre for Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE).

 www.linkedin.com/in/ashmita-randhawa

At SSC, Dr Randhawa leads the development of new programmes across the organisation's strategic themes, with a focus on innovation and skills to ensure people and businesses are prepared for the jobs of the future. An engineer turned qualitative researcher, she has led major projects examining how emerging technologies and skills development are of dual importance.

She brings experience from both academia and industry, having previously worked in R&D product development at Procter & Gamble, and holds a DPhil from the University of Oxford.

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orangebus.



Julian Leighton
Co-founder of Orange Bus

Julian works as a mentor and advisor across a range of technology ventures, and as a Non-Executive Director at Land Digital, he supports the leadership team in shaping strategic growth and building digital services that deliver lasting value.

He was previously the co-founder and CEO of Orange Bus, the award-winning digital transformation agency. Here, he helped the company scale to 150 people who then delivered major programmes for clients across the UK and Europe. The business was acquired by Capita in 2016, after which Julian joined the board of Capita Software, helping guide its digital strategy.

With a background in creative industries, business scale-up and public-private sector partnerships, he brings a grounded and forward-thinking perspective to the future of smart cities.

 www.linkedin.com/in/julianleighton/

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Dr Emma Stone

Director of Evidence and Engagement at the Good Things Foundation

Dr Emma Stone is Director of Evidence and Engagement at the Good Things Foundation, the UK's leading digital inclusion charity.

Emma's work straddles policy, partnerships, and research, including the pioneering Minimum Digital Living Standard for UK Households. Emma is also a plenary member of the Government's Digital Inclusion Action Committee, co-chairing the Industry Leadership and Partnership sub-committee.

Dr Stone has over two decades of experience working in the charity sector, most notably from her work as Director of Policy & Research and Director of Outcomes at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

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Alasdair Greig
Director at Northstar Ventures

Alasdair Greig is a Director at Northstar Ventures, a venture capital firm focused on supporting ambitious founders who are building globally scalable businesses based in the North East of England.

In 2024, Northstar launched the Venture Sunderland Fund, a hyper-local venture fund targeting investment opportunities within Sunderland. The Fund prioritises businesses in the technology, creative and digital, advanced manufacturing, and climate sectors, where Sunderland holds a unique global advantage.

Alasdair also sits on the Investment Committee for the £100m National Clean Growth Fund. Alasdair's expertise spans venture capital, investment strategy, and regional development.

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Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology



Jill McKinney

Director of Delivery at Sunderland Software City and member of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology Digital Skills Council

Jill Mckinney is the Director of Delivery at Sunderland Software City and sits on the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology Digital Skills Council.

Jill's academic career has been spent ensuring tech talent and industry connect in the right ways, helping people and businesses grow in the growing digital economy.

 www.linkedin.com/in/jill-mckinney

Jill has over a decade of experience working with Sunderland Software City. She initially worked as a Training & Delivery manager and then Head of Skills and Training, before being promoted as Director of Delivery. Jill is also the Director of Dynamo North East, the largest non-for-profit tech sector business membership organisation in the North East.

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Naomi Hutchinson

Chief Innovation and Growth Officer at Sunderland City Council

Naomi Hutchinson is Chief Innovation and Growth Officer at Sunderland City Council.

She plays a central role in shaping the city's Smart City programme, driving innovation that delivers real social, economic, and environmental benefits for residents and businesses.

With over a decade of experience in the region's tech and digital sectors, Naomi brings deep expertise in leveraging technology to drive inclusive growth and business transformation. Previously, as Head of Innovation at Sunderland Software City, she championed tech founders, brokered transformative partnerships, and unlocked opportunities at the intersection of supply and demand.

Naomi is passionate about building open, collaborative ecosystems where innovation is accessible to all, and cities become platforms for opportunity. Her work is helping Sunderland become one of the UK's most inclusive and forward-thinking smart cities.

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