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Ford Smart Benches Help London Pedestrians Stay Connected on the Move with Mobile Charging and Wi-Fi

- Having no internet access, or worse, running out of smartphone battery, can be stressful
- Pedestrians can stay connected with free solar-powered mobile charging and Wi-Fi access
- Users and local authorities can access environmental data from network of 20 benches
- While using benches, Londoners can donate to charities with Ford Fund matching pledges

LONDON, Sept. 27, 2017 – Worrying about a flat smartphone battery could become a thing of the past – at least for some pedestrians in London. Ford and smart cities start-up Strawberry Energy are rolling out smart benches to offer pedestrians free solar-powered mobile charging and Wi-Fi access while they sit and rest across the city.

The collaboration will initially provide 20 Ford Smart Benches, doubling the number of benches installed by Strawberry Energy earlier this year. As well as enabling people to use their device to plan onward journeys, the hi-tech street furniture can monitor noise, carbon dioxide, humidity, and temperature. The information will be available free of charge to bench users and participating London boroughs and could help inform future decisions.

“At Ford, we believe the city of tomorrow should make people feel happy, safe and connected, so we’re looking at how streets could be designed to serve a full range of activities: walking, biking, driving, connecting with others, and of course, business and services that support our economies,” said Sarah-Jayne Williams, director, Ford Smart Mobility, Europe. “Walking, along with driving and riding public transport, is part of how people get around in a city like London and Ford Smart Benches complement perfectly the increasingly connected lives we now lead.”

Access to Wi-Fi and charging, both wirelessly and via ports, is free, not just for smartphones but also for tablets, cameras and wearables. There will also be an opportunity for those using the urban pit stops to make a donation to U.K. charities St Mungo’s, Rethink Mental Illness and Macmillan Cancer Support. Ford Motor Company Fund, the company’s philanthropic arm, will match donations received from bench users, up to £10,000 for each charity.

“Whether for fitness, convenience, or simply the pleasure of being outdoors, many people enjoy walking, but dread being unable to access maps, social media, and news sites while on the move,” said Miloš Milisavljević, founder and CEO, of Strawberry Energy. “Ford Smart Benches in Islington, Lewisham and Southwark will increasingly help ensure that walking will continue to be a key part of how Londoners enjoy their city.”

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About Strawberry Energy

Strawberry Energy (www.smartbench.london) develops solar-powered street furniture for smart cities to enhance the outdoor experience of the 21st century mobile generation. The UK-based company was awarded first prize at the European Commission's Sustainable Energy Week 2011 in Brussels, leading to its mobile charging stations being installed in 59 places across the Europe and US.

About Ford Motor Company

Ford Motor Company is a global company based in Dearborn, Michigan. The company designs, manufactures, markets and services a full line of Ford cars, trucks, SUVs, electrified vehicles and Lincoln luxury vehicles, provides financial services through Ford Motor Credit Company and is pursuing leadership positions in electrification, autonomous vehicles and mobility solutions. Ford employs approximately 203,000 people worldwide. For more information regarding Ford, its products and Ford Motor Credit Company, please visit www.corporate.ford.com.

Ford of Europe is responsible for producing, selling and servicing Ford brand vehicles in 50 individual markets and employs approximately 52,000 employees at its wholly owned facilities and approximately 66,000 people when joint ventures and unconsolidated businesses are included. In addition to Ford Motor Credit Company, Ford Europe operations include Ford Customer Service Division and 24 manufacturing facilities (16 wholly owned or consolidated joint venture facilities and eight unconsolidated joint venture facilities). The first Ford cars were shipped to Europe in 1903 – the same year Ford Motor Company was founded. European production started in 1911.

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