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Mobile phones may replace Oyster cards for payment system

New technology means tokens can be added to equipped handsets

by Amber Maitland published on 23 October 2006

Technology to let you use your mobile as a virtual wallet is being trialled at Manchester City this season.

Around 200 season ticket holders are using Nokia 3320 handsets that contain a chip read by a scanner as they go through the gates, says a report in The Guardian newspaper.

The technology is known as Near Field Communication or NFC technology, and lets users buy small value tokens to store on their handsets. Nokia is banking on the fact that this technology will be incorporated into ever more handsets next year.

NXP Semiconductors makes the technology behind the Manchester City trial and the Oyster Card system in London. It believes that handsets will replace Oyster cards in the next few years. It says that the putting adding money to the tokens is safe, as the money can be deactivated if the handset is stolen, and adding credit to the phone is PIN protected so that a thief can't withdraw cash to the handset.

Similar technology is already being implemented on Bullet trains in Japan for customers that have either of Motorola's two equipped handsets.