

GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SECTOR JOURNAL

SUMMER/AUTUMN 2018



A caring council: buying the co-operative way

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A SIMPLE STEP TOWARDS GDPR COMPLIANCE

Keeping your public sector data private

There is a lot of scaremongering surrounding GDPR, yet it is really all about the implementation of best practices for securing data – which can only be a good thing.

If you feel unprepared or can't see a way forward, you are not alone – a recent Apricorn survey revealed that 34% of the surveyed organisations were not aware of GDPR and its implications and of those who were, 17% didn't have a plan for ensuring compliance.

GDPR doesn't prescribe technologies and the implementation of processes, policies and procedures is left to each business. However, there are some quick wins that can address your biggest liability, a potential fine for breach.

Article 22 requires 'the pseudonymisation and encryption of personal data'. Article 24 notes that in the event of a breach, if the data involved is encrypted, there isn't a requirement to contact each individual affected, thereby avoiding the resultant administrative costs.

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McCann lighting the way in North Lincolnshire



Nottingham-based civil and electrical engineering firm McCann is adding to its growing portfolio of LED street lighting replacement projects with a new contract for North Lincolnshire.

McCann commenced work in October 2017 and is expecting to complete the project within 14 months - 10 months earlier than anticipated.

The works are centred on the town of Scunthorpe and the surrounding area and once completed, North Lincolnshire will benefit from the replacement and upgrade of 19,000 lanterns that include energy-saving LED technology. The installation of these lanterns will make a significant annual cost-saving for the Authority and due to the early completion, savings will be greater and sooner than originally anticipated.

Works include the upgrade of

earthing and isolation points to bring them in line with current regulations, as well as TR22 inspections of concrete columns to assist with risk management and to prioritise any future replacement programmes.

This project comes hot on the heels of McCann's successful installation and ongoing maintenance of lanterns across North East Lincolnshire, as well as other projects taking place in Calderdale, Hillingdon and Camden.

Mike Simpson, Group Manager for Transport Asset Management at North Lincolnshire Council, is delighted with the progress made so far and is looking forward to

the long-term benefits that these new LED street lights will bring.

"At a time when other authorities are switching off street lights, we're making the move to white-light LEDs because of their reduced energy consumption, saving us thousands of pounds a year and reducing our carbon footprint."

He continued: "We're really pleased with the quick turnaround on this project by the McCann team, and we're hoping to bring the next phase forward and replace an additional 4,000 lanterns across the area."

Speaking about the project in North Lincolnshire, McCann's Contracts Manager Geoff Standley

said: "As with any work we carry out, everything is conducted in a safe and efficient manner with the aim of providing a quality installation that requires minimal ongoing maintenance."

"We have achieved this by the implementation of McCann's accredited policies, procedures and training, supported by regular internal quality and safety audits. This ultimately guarantees the safe and high-quality delivery of the project for our Client."

To find out more about McCann and the company's portfolio of projects, visit

www.mccann-ltd.co.uk

New online toolkit will help to tackle modern slavery

A new online toolkit has been designed by experts to help organisations tackle modern slavery in their local communities.

Throughout the UK, many different organisations are working hard to prevent slavery, promote the identification of victims, offer support to survivors and to ensure slavery can't flourish.

Now, experts from the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham and the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) have designed an online toolkit to help local organisations and agencies to tackle modern slavery by working together.

The toolkit was developed in response to research carried out in 2017 by experts from the Rights Lab and the IASC office, which showed that although multi-agency partnership work was developing across the UK, it lacked consistency and resources. There was also a lack of monitoring and evaluation of what

partnership activity was taking place and what constituted good practice.

Dr Alison Gardner, who led the research from the Rights Lab and helped to develop the toolkit, said: "Local partnerships play a vital role in tackling modern slavery and we hope this toolkit will help them improve the vital work they are already doing."

"By putting together a checklist to help agencies review what activity is already taking place in their areas, a governance library to improve performance, and access to a UK Training Library - plus a range of other information, we hope that agencies will be able to see where they have gaps they need to fill and how they can improve their current working practices."

The Rights Lab is a University of Nottingham Beacon of Excellence that brings together over 100 scholars to deliver research that helps to end global slavery by 2030.

The toolkit is a free online website which includes:

- A partnership checklist – to help organisations to review their needs and highlight relevant resources available on the website

- A governance library – a library of sample documentation that can be used by different agencies to help formalise partnership working

- Downloadable resources – information to help with partnership working, such as how to plan an awareness campaign, engaging with different partners, or reviewing care plans

- Reports and legislations – a collection of up to date legislation and guidance.

- A UK Training Library - access to free training resources

Robin Brierley, Chair of the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network, said: "The West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network and the Preventing Violence against Vulnerable People panel were extremely pleased to be asked to work on this toolkit together with the IASC and the University of Nottingham."

"Partnership working is instrumental in combatting all

issues of modern slavery, but what is not so clear is responsibility for governance and accountability, who should fund partnerships and what success looks like.

"This toolkit will be of tremendous value in helping to explore these issues, not only for the Police, but all agencies whose work includes Modern Slavery and the wider exploitation of vulnerable people."

Kim Ann Williamson MBE of the CPS said: "I am excited that the UK approved modern slavery training now has the platform to be accessible to groups and organisations outside of the classroom environment."

"Working closely with the experts involved in this project has been really interesting, and has provided a fresh view of how we deliver training. The toolkit is a great example of how we can use technology to raise awareness of modern slavery."

The toolkit can be found at <https://iasctoolkit.nottingham.ac.uk/#>.

AI won't live up to the hype without trust, CPI warns world leaders in Estonia

Centre for Public Impact (CPI) launches action plan at Tallinn Digital Summit to help governments make AI work for people

The introduction of artificial intelligence by Government has the potential to achieve great things. However public trust in AI is low, and the Centre for Public Impact (CPI), a global not-for-profit foundation, today tells government leaders that the use of AI must be legitimate or will fail to help public services do a better job for people.

AI is soon expected to help authorities more identify tax fraudsters and make public transport responsive to traveller needs in real time throughout the world. Some people however predict more negative outcomes and fear job losses.

Authorities around the world are already using AI - from assessing which railway carriages may need maintenance work next to judging which convicted offenders might be most likely to reoffend.

But many Governments are not adequately prepared, and are not taking the right steps to engage and inform citizens of where and

how AI is being used or could be used to secure the levels of trust and understanding needed to achieve legitimacy and allow AI to really help public servants do their jobs.

The Centre for Public Impact (CPI) has today produced a new paper How to make AI work in government and for people which sets out realistic and practical recommendations for governments to use to result in its successful implementation.

Discussed today at the Tallinn Digital Summit with an audience of Heads of State, digital world leaders and AI experts, the

CPI says that in order to cut through the prevailing narrative of scaremongering about 'machines taking over the world', governments need to take measured steps to build legitimacy as we proceed.

The new Centre for Public Impact paper for governments will be published at www.centreforpublicimpact.org

Councils embrace analytics to drive improved citizen services

New FOI research from Looker reveals seven in 10 local authorities are leveraging data analytics to enhance quality of services

Seven out of 10 (71%) UK local authorities are harnessing data analytics to improve citizen services, according to new figures released today.

This new data was obtained by a Freedom of Information (FOI)

request by data platform company Looker, issued to 60 UK local authorities, with 41 responding. The research unearths the volume of councils now leveraging analytics, as well as the broad range of services councils are deploying with the aid of such technology.

Of those 26 authorities currently utilising business intelligence software, it is being harnessed for improving waste collection (58%),

planning and development (46%), council tax services (38%) and traffic / movement analysis (35%). Other use-cases are wide-ranging, including social care (both adult and children's), web services, housing, public health, financial services, procurement and education.

Local authorities have cited several benefits following deployments including improved service provisions, reduced costs,

better decision making and a clearer understanding of customer journeys.

Half (50%) of responding local authorities are also considering investing increased funds into data analytics / business intelligence technology over the next 12 months, underlining positive returns from initial deployments.

Special theatre show about dangers of knife crime to tour Scotland's schools

This unique theatre performance, 'Balisong', designed for schools, by young performers, empowers young people to stand up, speak out and get help if a friend or classmate is carrying a knife.

The play charts the journey of three friends through the final weeks of school. They're facing a dilemma. What should they do now that one of their friends has started carrying a knife?

It will be performed in 95 schools across every local authority in Scotland, and is set to reach 25,000 young people over the next six months.

The project builds on the success of the first 'Balisong' play and tour last year, which was performed in 17 councils to 12,200 pupils.

The schools tour has also been shortlisted for the Herald Society Awards 2018 under the Partnership Award category for the work in partnership between NKBL, Fast Forward and Strange Town.

The play has been created using a peer-theatre approach. This approach engages directly with young people's ideas, opinions and experiences of knife crime and uses their daily experience as the catalyst and

inspiration for the story. This approach ensures the project is led by young people, for young people.

Along with the play, a post-performance workshop will draw out key themes from the play and ask the audience to reflect on the central question: what would you do if someone you knew was carrying a knife?

To develop the schools tour further, No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) has developed a new lesson plan for secondary schools based on 'Balisong'. Through the resource, young people will understand why it is important to do something if they know that someone else is carrying a knife. The resource will be given to each school on the tour and is also available to download for free via the NKBL website.

Justice Secretary, Humza Yousaf MSP, said: "I am pleased to say the Scottish Government is providing an additional £25,000 to YouthLink Scotland this year to ensure that 'Balisong' will be seen in every local authority throughout 2018/19, including a showing in HMYOI Polmont."

Emily Beever, National Co-ordinator for NKBL at YouthLink Scotland commented:

"In the last decade, the level of knife crime in Scotland has drastically reduced, but one incident is still one too many. Work with young people is key

to continuing to prevent knife crime. 'Balisong' has given us an exciting new way to talk to all young people about their role in preventing knife carrying through peer support. The feedback has shown that already more than 12,000 young people will think twice before picking up a knife."

Alastair MacKinnon, Chief Executive at Fast Forward said: "There has been a tremendous reaction from young people and teachers in all of the schools that we have toured to so far. Creative partnership has been at the forefront of this project, and we are delighted to see how it is paying off in the response of young people to this powerful play."

Councillor Fiona Campbell, East Ayrshire Council's Cabinet Member for Skills and Learning added:

"Watching how pupils reacted to Balisong and listening to their feedback afterwards, it is absolutely clear this vital message has been delivered - and understood - in a creative, engaging and most comprehensive way."

The touring play 'Balisong' is a No Knives Better Lives project. Produced by Fast Forward in association with YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work. It has been written by Jennifer Adam and directed by Steve Small of Strange Town.



UNISON responds to CQC State of Care report

Commenting on the latest Care Quality Commission's report on the state of social care in the UK, UNISON head of local government Jon Richards said:

"While it's reassuring to see standards of care haven't fallen, this is all due to the dedication of hardworking staff. Despite many hurdles and challenges, they maintain their professionalism and always put the people they care

for first.

"But unfortunately, there won't be any significant improvement in the quality of care until the lack of training and persistent low pay in the care sector are tackled.

"Attempts to bring closer

working with the NHS will only happen when social care is properly funded.

"Much more needs to be done to improve the social care sector and restore the dignity that's lacking."

Work starts on new Bestwood Village Primary School

Construction works are officially underway at a replacement primary school within the new Westhouse Farm housing development in Bestwood, following a £5 million investment from Nottinghamshire County Council.

The new school will replace the existing Hawthorne Primary and Nursery, originally built in 1878, which is now split over two sites and does not have room for further expansion to meet an increasing demand for places.

The school will relocate from its current position in School Walk, in order to meet the growing

demand for school spaces, following the announcement of a new housing development for the area. It will be positioned between the new housing development and the existing settlement of Bestwood, ensuring it is accessible for new and existing families.

The new school will provide 315 places, with capacity for expansion to 420 places in the future.

The County Council school, which is being delivered by Arc Partnership – a joint venture between Nottinghamshire County Council and Scape Group – is set to complete in summer 2019, in time for the new academic year.

Councillor Kay Cutts MBE, Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council, said: "Between 2013 and 2016, the County Council invested approximately £70m of Government Basic Need funding to create more than 5,500 additional permanent primary school places to meet demand and we continue to invest in the areas where it is needed, either through expanding existing sites or building new schools.

"There has been a considerable amount of new housing development in Bestwood over the last ten years, which has attracted many young families to the area. With further housing development in Bestwood outlined

in Gedling's Local Plan, it was important that we acted swiftly to ensure the extra demand for school places could be met.

"I know that children, parents and teachers can't wait for the new school to be built and they are excited that construction work is now underway. Providing a modern, high quality learning environment for our children can only be beneficial for their education."

Funded by Nottinghamshire County Council, the project is being delivered by Arc Partnership including feasibility and design, through to project management.

For more information visit www.arc-partnership.co.uk

Weholite structures awarded HAPAS certificate in first for industry

When is a pipe not a pipe? When its diameter is greater than 900mm and it's installed under a road. This paradoxical riddle is what has been blocking the use of large diameter HDPE structured wall systems under Britain's highways.

However, all that is about to change.

Asset International Ltd has become the first manufacturer of HDPE structured wall systems to achieve a coveted HAPAS accreditation for pipe structures larger than 900mm. The water management specialist has received a Highway Authorities' Product Approval Scheme (HAPAS) accreditation from British Board of Agrément (BBA) for its Weholite pipes, fittings and systems for sizes from 1000mm to 3500mm.

The accreditation, which means that Weholite structures are considered suitable and beneficial for use in highways, makes

them the first, and currently only, products of their kind to hold this approval.

Plastic pipes with an internal diameter greater than 900mm are classed as 'structures' and do not yet have an official technical standard for use in highways. In the past, this might have excluded plastic pipes over 900mm being utilised in highway projects, or at the least made it a very difficult and drawn out process; regardless of the many advantages they can offer for applications such as attenuation, surface water drainage and culverts. However, the HAPAS certificate should now help to remove such barriers and allow the acceptance of these products to be a far less onerous affair.

The British Board of Agrément (BBA) has issued HAPAS certificate (18/H283), for this Weholite product group, in recognition of its high performance and reliability. The certification applies specifically to 1000mm to 3500mm diameter Weholite pipes,

fittings and systems.

Simon Thomas, managing director at Asset said: "This is an incredible accomplishment and the culmination of what has been a long and arduous road. It would not have been possible without the help and assistance of the Plastic Pipes Group and the British Board of Agrément who have worked extremely hard in helping us to achieve this success."

Established in 1995, the HAPAS scheme was created with the aim of developing a national approval and certification processes for products, materials and systems used in highways and related areas. The approval process involves rigorous laboratory and road tests, site inspections, performance trials and an evaluation of production, supported by a technical advisory committee made up of key representatives from the industry.

Recognised by key organisations in the highways sector, the HAPAS accreditation

supports the fact that Weholite structures are not only suitable for use in highways, but that projects could also derive additional benefits from using them.

Simon added: "Our experience has shown that larger diameter plastic pipes and systems can provide better performance, but also offer a range of added benefits. Made from high-density polyethylene (HDPE) resin, Weholite pipes and structures are extremely tough, flexible, and chemically resistant, with a design life in excess of 120 years. Their superior loading capacity means they are ideally placed for use in highways and are more than capable of withstanding the extreme loading conditions placed upon them in these applications."

The latest accreditation joins Asset's existing HAPAS certificate for its 450mm to 900mm diameter Weholite pipes.

GDPR - the fatigue, the fear and the robots

Many of us are suffering from GDPR fatigue. All articles, news reports, internal meetings are essentially repeating the ICO's main principals and broad steps needed to become compliant. The word journey is also banded about, suggesting if steps are being taken, and can be proved, you'll avoid the hefty fines which now act as the GDPR stick.

However, three months on GDPR is slowly starting to feel like something real, rather than something hypothetical found in a business text book.

Within the first month of GDPR, the ICO received 1,124 complaints about data breaches. Mainly from individuals, but sometimes from organisations proactively informing the ICO of breaches. This was a sharp increase from previous years, but it appears not a knee jerk reaction that was to abate. Now the ICO has released data from the first three months, and it has received 6,281 complaints. This averages around 2,500 complaints a month for months two and three.

If you then compare to 2017, the ICO only received 2,417 in total over the same three-month period, a 300% increase. Clearly, individuals are not only aware they have rights now but feel empowered to do something about it.

So, has everyone in the UK read the GDPR policy and do they know when to complain?

I highly doubt it, but data breaches are news headlines, and not only that they are high profile. So, while the nuances might still be a problem, stories such as Facebook/Cambridge Analytica are well known, and without knowing all the details can provide individuals with a general sense of personal data ownership and rights, and a confidence that companies can be held to account.

Without a doubt the number of organisations that approach Restore with requirements that stem from GDPR concerns has risen sharply, especially over the last two months. And this isn't just organisations that are worried about how they hold customer data, but increasingly HR teams worried about their employee data.

What is worrying organisations the most? Where are their weak points?

From our internal research a lot of organisations are worried about what they call dark boxes of data – ie stored boxes whose contents are unknown; and the amount

of archive paper data. This paper data is hard to categorise and know quickly and simply what you hold on an individual. As data becomes increasingly digital, individuals can have some data on paper and some stored electronically.

This makes organisations uncomfortable that they can quickly reply to SAR requests, and most importantly keep up to date with retention periods.

What are retention periods and why are they important?

With the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica scandal we learnt about data harvesting, where individuals hand over data believing it's just for one thing, eg an innocent game/quiz on Facebook.

still classed as data breaches. When you hold individuals' information, each type of information has a retention period – this is how long you must keep the information on file, and then a time when it must be deleted, and you are no longer allowed to hold that information.

And for HR Teams this isn't as straight forward as after X years delete all data held on a previous employee. Each type of information has different retention periods, so information about maternity will have a different retention period to next of kin/emergency contact details, to pension information. And this is when paper records make conforming to GDPR difficult, time consuming and manual.

period are met.

And if you get AI involved, you can link data held in different databases on the same individual, so updates are replicated. AI can also pull information out of documents and process information if it is an invoice etc.

In conclusion

"If the 2013/14 Yahoo data breach happened today", commented Paul Moonan, Managing Director of Restore Digital, "the company would have faced fines anywhere in the region of \$80-160 million. No matter the size of your company, this is a devastating amount. It is important to treat data as a privilege and understand the rules and rights of the individuals. It's also important



However, that information might be sold on, along with other information Facebook harvests or, the game itself might be created by a data company like Cambridge Analytica which wants to use that data for other commercial uses. Basically, a sense of tricking the individual.

T-Mobile is another organisation who seems to be constantly in the news with data breaches. Their issues are around data security and unauthorized data access.

However, data breaches aren't just these high-profile examples, that most companies have high up on their risk agenda. Not adhering to retention periods are

Robots to the rescue

GDPR in a nutshell is about safe, secure, accurate information not kept longer than necessary. If you digitise, you can automate, and if you automate you can let robots keep you GDPR compliant.

A good records management system allows you to set permissions and rules for each bit of data, giving internal colleagues different access to information contained within one database.

A good database with robotics sat within it, can automatically remove data into recycle bins, ready for you to check and delete, once certain rules like retention

to remove the manual aspect of data management. Not only is it time consuming but is prone to errors that can be costly. Utilising technology and robotics can make GDPR a simple task".

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Digitalisation: Businesses must mitigate against new, invisible risks

Written by Jon Fielding, Managing Director, EMEA Apricorn

Digital transformation is happening everywhere at breakneck speed. Each year brings a new development or a new technology that increases and evolves digital strategies worldwide. Of particular exposure to emerging risks are organisations that use cloud services or solutions connected to the Internet of Things (IoT). As organisations digitalise more processes and data, the number of potential security gaps is surging, increasing the risk of damaging data breaches.

If the full benefits of developments such as cloud services and IoT are to be realised, digital data must be protected at all times – but most security strategies and policies are no longer fit for purpose, being traditionally ad hoc and limited point solutions. In this age, information security must become a key strategic priority if organisations are to have any hope of mitigating the risks of digitalisation while enjoying the benefits.

Cyber security has become a much-discussed topic in recent years, and the advent of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has only served to heighten the conversation. So why are so many organisations embracing the future of digitalisation while their security strategies are stuck in the past?

Ease of use

As we have all seen in the wake of GDPR, there is a tendency to associate heightened cyber security and data protection measures with a worsening user experience. However, this doesn't have to be the case.

When security is an integral part of a business strategy, and not incorporated as an afterthought, there is time to formulate the easiest and most effective processes for employees to follow. Building security into your strategy should also mean it is adaptable to new and emerging technologies.

Once thought to be squarely an IT concern, with the advent of data protection laws and greater digitalisation across organisations, security is now a cross-departmental issue and should be something the board regularly reviews.

The speed of digital transformation

Often the thought of bolstering security practices seems antithetical to the pace of digital transformation. Updated security measures are associated with regulations, best practice processes, training and awareness. These associations can make security seem like a hindrance, rather than an aid to achieving digital transformation.

The truth is that on the contrary, security is moving to the forefront of digital innovation. When built into new technologies and devices from the outset, security enables wider, secure and more seamless access to data in the IoT.

The landscape of digital technologies

As the Internet of Things becomes flooded with newer and faster digital technologies the breadth of "things" available can seem incompatible with a comprehensive digital strategy. As with most strategies data is key. Gathering, synthesising and analysing security data from

across the landscape will keep organisations alert to risks and allow the development of an adaptable strategy to protect against these risks.

Developing effective security requires strategy and, most importantly, must be prioritised in a time of such rapid digital change. While there is no set template for such a solution, investing time and money in the process is a good way to start. Depending on the requirements of a specific company, an effective security strategy will look at integrating different technologies, the handling and protection of data, and organisation-wide training in best practice processes to minimise risks, regularly.

Business security strategies must keep pace with the speed of their digital transformation programmes. This means carrying out data audits at regular intervals, and reviewing policies to check that they remain fit for purpose. Security systems must be up to date – particularly encryption and authentication technologies – tested regularly, and adjusted to defend against evolving cyber threats.

The most important aspect of a successful security strategy however is consistency. Build security into your organisation's digital strategy from the beginning, make sure it is observed across the board, and you have the best chance of being protected against new and emerging security risks in the digital age.



Jon Fielding

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A chatbot that understands what I need?



Taking AI to a new dimension in housing

By Trevor Hampton, director of housing product solutions and Northgate Public Services

Back in 1997, IBM's Deep Blue, one of the world's first artificial intelligence (AI) creations, defeated world champion, Garry Kasparov in a chess match. At the time, many refused to believe that a machine could play with such a powerful human touch and defeat humanity at its own game.

21 years after Deep Blue's controversial victory, AI is poised to serve humanity, not defeat it, by transforming housing management.

That may be a bold statement, and there's certainly no shortage of hype around AI. But now that the technology has reached the age of maturity, we are seeing the positive impact of AI in a wide range of business sectors, from cancer diagnostics in medicine to fraud prevention for banks.

And in April this year, the Government put its weight behind AI when it announced its AI Sector Deal, a move to invest in research, people, places and infrastructure to help lead the transformation of AI technology.

So, we ignore AI at our peril, but the question remains, does AI really have the potential to transform housing?

Beyond the chatbot

For some years now, public sector digital strategy has focused on driving customers towards online channels, and away from telephone and face-to-face interactions, in a quest to cut costs and improve the customer experience. One of the integral tools of this approach has been the chatbot.

Using natural language interfaces, chatbots enable customers to ask questions,

give instructions and confirm information by speaking. The bots usually work best when these conversations have a pre-set order. So, if your transaction with the housing provider is simple, paying a bill, say, or booking a repair, the interaction is straightforward and no human intervention is needed.

However, the problem arises when a customer has a more complex enquiry, needing to discuss their rent arrears, or benefits payments for example. In these cases, the bot interaction often has to be abandoned, the digital transaction reaches the end of the road, and the customer resorts to picking up the phone.

Join the conversation

To overcome these limitations, some customer facing organisations in sectors such as financial services and banking are turning to a new generation of bot, known as conversational AI.

Conversational AI provides another layer of AI altogether which harnesses the power of machine learning, speech synthesis and natural language understanding to get to the heart of the customers' needs and respond appropriately. It can even cope with the complex sentences and idiosyncrasies of human speech.

The game-changer with conversational AI, and the reason it has such a significant capacity to transform housing transactions is that the technology has the capability to use, and learn from, all the content on the organisation's website. This means that the AI actually builds a detailed knowledge bank, which it can add to on an ongoing basis, to help customers.

An evolving solution

Customers frequently need to interact with their housing officer on a range of different topics, involving the condition of their property, repairs to appliances and payment details. They don't want to have to navigate through pages of information that aren't relevant to them before they find what they need.

Where an organisation has embedded conversational AI into its system, a customer can log on to the housing organisation's website and ask questions using either text or voice, and the AI tool can pull together all the information which is buried deep in a website to provide the customer with an answer.

Of course, there will always be times where no machine can be a substitute for the human touch. But unlike the traditional chatbot which follows set pathways through an interaction, conversational AI can identify when a customer is vulnerable and may need the additional help of a real agent. The customer can then be helped with human intervention.

Saving time and resources

New innovations in technology don't tend to come cheap. But if you consider the difference between types of customer transactions, it's interesting to see that, taking the long view, an AI based solution can help to drive savings.

According to SOCITM, it can cost as much as £14 to serve a customer in person, and £5 on the phone. Traditional web chats, where an agent interacts online with a customer, cost a similar amount. While a conversational AI chat can be as little as 20 pence

per conversation.

With these cost benefits, it will be interesting to see how this trend in conversational AI will continue to develop in the housing sector, but its impact could be felt sooner rather than later. These intelligent conversational interfaces are already making waves in customer service driven businesses because the technology is already available.

Improved asset management

So, in terms of customer service, conversational AI could provide some relatively quick wins. We may, however, need to take the longer view when it comes to embedding AI into other areas of the housing sector, such as asset management.

It has long been recognised that AI has the potential to enable housing providers to manage their stock more efficiently. Neural networks, or machine learning (ML) which falls under the umbrella of AI, can tell us a lot about the condition of a property without a human officer needing to go through the door.

Currently, housing organisations rely on planned maintenance programmes to ensure their properties are in good condition and everything is running smoothly. When problems arise, it is up to the customer to contact their housing officer and inform them that there is a defect, and a repair needs to be carried out.

This can mean that in some cases, defects are not reported and as a result, a property can quickly fall into disrepair.

However, AI has the capability to predict when a boiler is likely to fail, how long a household appliance will last and if a house is at risk of becoming damp. This takes the onus away from

the tenant, because with this information, housing providers are able to plan repairs and maintenance much more effectively. Savings can be made by avoiding unnecessary repairs, while customers benefit from appliances that work well because they are being monitored for their performance.

Building AI into asset management will help housing providers make the shift from 'defects and repair' to 'predict and prevent'. The result of this shift will be significant cost savings on planned maintenance, better information to inform the 30 year modelling process, and a reduction in the need for many repairs in the first instance.

A marathon and a sprint

While the application of AI in managing housing stock has enormous benefits, it's a long term project because AI asset models

take time to build and validate, and to connect to existing assets.

However, given time, this is an area where AI will ultimately be transformational.

Part of the challenge is knowing at what point an investment in AI is likely to have the greatest returns. In some areas, such as customer service, developments such as conversational AI are ready to make an immediate impact, while in others, like asset management, we are taking a future view.

It may be 21 years ago since the world first realised the power of AI to defeat an opponent in chess; but now are we truly seeing what AI can do to solve problems, save resources and improve lives.

To find out more about Northgate Public Services' brighter thinking for housing, please visit:

www.northgateps.com/housing

Trevor Hampton



The robots are coming

Robotics and AI are a hot topic, and while pioneering work from the recently defunct "Rethink Robotics", to work undertaken by the Ocado Innovation Team is visually exciting, the reality of AI and Robotics and where it will have real impact in our lives is less dramatic.

Restore Digital's recent white paper "The Robots are Coming" is a great introduction to the world of Robotics and AI, and highlights where it is being used most effectively within the public sector to make data work harder.

Rigorous Data Protection Acts and GDPR are vital in today's world, but also highlight how valuable information can be for organisations.

This isn't just from a sales perspective. Think about all the data that comes into your organisation daily. Whether email, telephone or physical post, data is constantly being gathered. Value often lies in getting that data to the correct person, into the appropriate database, or in the case of invoices or remittances, matched to the relevant PO as quickly as possible. By digitalising data, whether through a mailroom,

a workflow (e.g. HR, claims, accounts) or a combination of the two, Robotics and AI can then be implemented to remove the manual administrative elements of these processes. This might not be as sexy as a drone flying around a warehouse picking an order, but it is vital to organisations under pressure to be as agile and efficient as possible.

For full details about how Robotics and AI might be able to support your organisation download Restore's whitepaper at www.restore.co.uk/digital/robotsarecoming

Five ways Local Authorities can integrate live chat into digital transformation

By Graham Jarvis - Freelance Business and Technology Journalist



Graham Jarvis

In June 2018 Salford City Council won the Digital Council of the Year and the overall Digital Leader accolades at the prestigious DL100 Awards ceremony during Digital Leaders week. The latter award was drawn from the winners of all of the categories. Steven Fry, Head of Customer and Digital Services, Salford City Council, says this makes the city council the "best of the best."

He says it was an amazing feeling to hear Salford City Council's name being announced as the winner at the event, describing it as testimony to the hard work the council had put in. He adds: "Our live chat facility featured in the submission as evidence of how we are providing customer services in a way that our residents want. Our call handlers can respond to 4 enquiries via live chat at any one time compared to just one via the phone."

Gemma Baker, Marketing Executive at live chat solutions provider Click4Assistance, explains how the seeds of success were sown. She says that Salford City Council approached her firm to help the council to streamline resourcing and to support the council's constituent customers. The council approached her organisation during the winter of 2015, and

after discussions about everything from live chat capabilities and strategy, Salford's live chat implementation began in April 2016.

"Having a reliable live chat solution, that is user-friendly, helps place representatives in a position where they can fully concentrate on the service they provide Salford City's residents", she claims before adding it means that the council can focus on what its citizens expect and require – a "fast and accurate response" to their enquiries. She elaborates: "It also aids managers overseeing the communication channel, to focus on their operators' performance and make improvements to their skills rather than being distracted by a solution that isn't working to their expectations."

Digital transformation

Beyond this, live chat and chatbots are part of the U.K. government and public sector's digital transformation agenda. So, there are a number of emergent trends to consider. From Fry's perspective, the first is about the fact that the public sector is embracing what he calls "true digital customer service design". Hot on its heels is the creation for 'true omnichannel services', and the third trend that he sees is the use of smart data, analytics, artificial intelligence and machine

learning.

"I think the public sector were a quite a way behind the private sector in terms of end-to-end service design properly until recently, we at Salford believe service design should cover all channels from digital to face-to-face", he reveals.

This may be why he finds that live chat and chatbots are being cautiously introduced to the public sector. However, Fry considers live chat to be a great addition to his council's customer service options: "We have carried out a lot of analysis around digital capabilities within the city to make sure that technologies such as live chat would be utilised, and around 85% of our citizens in Salford are digitally capable, hence the reason we implemented it." In addition to this, he stresses that the council runs a digital first strategy – from end-to-end service design to face-to-face contact and telephony. The aim of this approach is to ensure that the council can cater for everyone living within the city.

Baker adds: "The government has set out a strategy to have local authorities digitally transformed by 2020. With the pressure on to achieve this, budget restraints also need to be taken into account. Therefore, live

chat becomes one of the methods that councils can implement to enable them to satisfactorily support their residents, whilst decreasing staff resources and not spending a fortune. In fact, most councils using Click4Assistance have implemented live chat for less than £5000 per annum, and so there is no need for the tender process to procure this communications channel."

Chabot enhancement

As for chatbots, Fry comments: "We're interested to see chatbots being used elsewhere as this could be a potential enhancement to the digital experience, allowing easy, tailored access to services on a 24-hour basis. The likely uses would be to help manage demand so that we can free up staff time to spend with residents who need more support."

"There are a few councils already taking a look into the technology but not many have actually implemented it", says Baker before commenting: "I reckon we will see this increase as AI can allow councils to dramatically reduce their contact centres and focus resource on customers who would prefer face-to-face contact, as you would only

need a few operators on hand to take chats, should they be requested by the resident or the bot cannot supply an answer."

Role for Artificial Intelligence

Fry believes that artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) will play a big role in government and public sector contact centres over the next

most of the wider determinants of health. What we are certain of is that whichever solutions we use intelligence-based workflow will be one of the biggest impacts for the organisation."

Talking about Salford City Council's plan for using AI and ML in customer services, he explains that its teams are at the point of refreshing its digital strategy for the next 3 years. The purpose of



few years. He thinks this will specifically be about tailoring the user experience and the user journeys:

"It will help to design and enable true public sector reform by understanding user needs, what services people with the city want to access, and to provide early insight for prevention and early intervention. This goes across health, social care, and debt,

this agenda is to consider how the council can best provide its services and link those aspirations with the relevant technology. Having said that, he comments: "We can see that AI and ML would allow for differentiated approaches to delivering customer services. This is about getting the right information and to support people within the city."

continued...





Gemma Baker, Marketing Executive, Click4Assistance

#Digital Salford

People before technology

After all the council has a saying that "It's not about the technology; or the project management style, it's about the people who use the it." For this reason one of the authority's digital transformation programmes is called the 'Digital You programme', which he explains is about "skilling up 8,000 residents in the city who don't have the 5 basic digital skills". To achieve this goal, the council is working with the Good Things Foundation to create "a real movement for change in the city."

Speaking again about why Salford City Council won its awards, he discloses: "Another key part of our submission was to describe how we are racing to become one of the world's most attractive cities for digital enterprise." Fry says a City Chief Digital Officer has been appointed and a Digital Collaborative have been created to help it to achieve this ambition. The

Digital Collaborative consists of Salford City Council, the Salford Royal Foundation Trust, Salford University and MediaCityUK.

He explains why this is important: "The whole ethos of the collaborative approach is around creating a single front door for inward investment in digital within the city and improving the opportunities and lives for the people who live in Salford. A recent announcement that Vodafone has set up a 5G test-bed in MediaCity UK. So, in summary, winning the award was about the city council's holistic approach to digital."

Top 5 integration tips

So, what are his five best practice ways to integrate live chat and chatbots into digital transformation programmes? In response to this question, he offers the following tips:

1. Ensure that you have the right

strategy – make sure your digital service design is right;

2. Properly research your customer base in terms of digital capability and appetite;
3. Bring live and chatbots in when the customer is ready, and build it into your digital design;
4. Co-design the solution with those who will be delivering the service, as well as those who will be using it.
5. Upskill the workforce in live chat and social media by having a workforce development plan.

Baker also adds her advice, she says: "Look at areas of the council people are getting most frustrated with; struggling to complete a certain type of form, or as council tax is a very popular section there can be lengthy waits to speak with someone from that team etc. These are then the primary areas that need to have live chat added so representatives can better support residents. (It's better to have chat across the website but

if only a few departments can have it then prioritise these first.)"

She concludes by saying that council must have a strategy in place to understand fully who will be managing live chat, the timescales involved in implementing it, customising it, and training etc. It's also an imperative to consider who the representatives handing the live chat will be: will it be handled by a chatbot or by a human being? There may some enquiries that are just perfect for a chatbot to answer, but there will be others that may require the empathetic human touch of a good customer services advisor. So, consider the purpose of the communications channel because once you've got a strategy in place, your Government department or council can work on being as successful as Salford.

For more information please visit: www.click4assistance.co.uk

Three ways AI will improve government services

Martin Linstrom, Managing Director, UK & Ireland, IPsoft

Automating tasks has huge potential to free up working hours in government. A recent report by Deloitte found that automation could liberate 96.7 million federal government working hours annually, while the UK Government's review "Growing the artificial intelligence (AI) industry in the UK" called for a programme to support the use of AI in the public sector, to reap its benefits here as well as in industry.

It's therefore unsurprising to see central and local governments around the world exploring the opportunities for AI to improve their services, as well as streamline their internal operations to drive greater efficiencies and reduce waste.

However, any new technology solution being considered requires a thorough evaluation of the potential benefits before its deployment. More importantly, the desired result must be determined. Too often, organisations become enamoured by the new shiny thing and let themselves be carried away by the exciting "potential" touted in its marketing, which then drives the plan for implementation.

Instead, it must always be the other way around. The point of technology is to help achieve a specific organisational goal faster and more efficiently, and AI is no different. Government organisations need to reflect on the best use cases where AI can improve government services and to set real, attainable goals that maximise the return on investment (ROI).

So, what opportunities do AI deployments present to central and local governments? Here are three use cases that show the potential value that can be reaped today.

Exceptional customer experience

Local councils serve their community and Enfield, a North London borough, enhanced its customer service for its more than 330,000 residents through the adoption of an intelligent virtual assistant to handle customer service queries. Receiving 100,000 website visits and 55,000 telephone calls each month, the council found it a challenge to provide fast and accurate responses. To combat these issues, Enfield Council hired IPsoft's digital colleague, Amelia, to absorb routine time-sensitive requests, such as pre-screening applications and self-certification for building plans.

Instead of requiring diverse visitors to be technology-literate, Enfield Council wanted its technology to be "people literate". Amelia has proven her capability in recognising the intent of Enfield user requests 98% of the time and performs routine business processes, she can be trusted to handle basic government tasks, such as licence applications, general queries about taxation, voting and local ordinances. If citizens have specific questions that must be addressed by humans, or ones that the Amelia can't address herself, she can escalate those queries to government workers. This reduces the workload of government employees exponentially, allowing them to focus on more complex and creative tasks, rather than spending time providing answers that the virtual assistant can deliver automatically.

Seamless employee services

For one US government agency's employees, making healthcare claims was a labour-intensive task. Typically, preparing to answer the form's questions would take

upwards of 40 hours.

To improve the employee experience, the agency introduced a virtual agent to act as a healthcare claims submission concierge. By speaking directly to Amelia, users were able to navigate lengthy and complex forms that classified them for specific medical claims in a fraction of that time. Clearly personnel security is critical to government organisations, so it is important that any government bodies that want a virtual assistant to manage sensitive employee data ensure that the solution has sophisticated security capabilities. These solutions can then act as a secure means of communication for government employees, and the general population, serving as a data collector and a processor of information.

Improving technological support

The government and public sector are under immense pressure to introduce new technologies to improve efficiencies and deliver better services – indeed, the previous two use cases are clear examples of that. And, with a recently announced £7.5 million government fund for councils that are seeking to transform their public services through digital

innovation, IT teams are having to invest great time and effort into developing and deploying new solutions, while keeping the lights on in an increasingly technologically dependent workplace.

Virtual agents also present a great opportunity to government organisations looking to digitise and innovate their offerings, by taking many repetitive, time-consuming and low-skilled jobs off the IT team's hands. These virtual assistants are also available on-demand 24/7 and swift in resolving high-volume, low-level issues such as password resets and FAQs, so no employee has to wait until the IT team gets into their office or get to their ticket.

Take hold of the opportunity with both hands

With so much potential, government organisations can't leave private organisations to reap all the benefits of AI. However, when paying with the public purse, these organisations are undoubtedly under greater scrutiny to deliver results. Planning for and implementing proven use cases will help government bodies use AI to improve their services and deliver clear ROI.

Martin Linstrom



Building a new future for infrastructure with ITRC

Until recently planning infrastructure projects in a joined up way was not possible due to the size of the datasets and number of data providers involved.

Infrastructure is at the heart of the UK and global economy and productivity, running through transport, communication, energy, water supply and waste management systems. The processes of digitisation and electrification are leading to increased interdependence between infrastructure networks, whilst resource scarcity (e.g. water, energy) is also intensifying interdependencies, and therefore vulnerability to threats.

To prevent significant systemic disruption to our transport, economy, well-being or even loss of life, it's essential that infrastructure is protected and scenarios explored to help counter threats such as cyberattacks, extreme climatic events, or accidents.

£770m to improve transport infrastructure in cities, and new funding for fibre and 5G investment. Billions more could be spent if disaster struck major infrastructure nodes.

The Infrastructure Transitions Research Consortium (ITRC) has developed a unique and powerful set of computer tools, NISMOD (National Infrastructure Systems MODel), to bring infrastructure planning and modelling into new realms.

ITRC is based at University of Oxford and is a collaboration of seven universities plus over 50 industry and research partners from infrastructure policy and practice. NISMOD is the world's first national infrastructure system-of-systems model to analyse long-term investment strategies.

An additional ITRC work programme focuses on Multi-Scale Infrastructure Systems Analytics (MISTRAL), working to develop an integrated analytics capability to inform infrastructure decision-making from local to global scale.

The world's first national infrastructure system-of-systems model

In terms of computing the ITRC NISMOD solution for data is very different architecturally from what's come before. It uses new database storage methods, new software developments, and couples different database systems together through a federated database architecture, NISMOD-DB++. This allows it to ingest and analyse the bigger datasets required for the fine scale analysis being undertaken with NISMOD.

The database architecture has been designed to allow each dataset to be stored in the most appropriate format and for them to be accessible through a single

point. This solution means the data is stored more efficiently - in computing terms - so network data for example is stored as a network rather than in a table as might have been done previously.

This approach allows users, such as researchers, to perform much more granular and fine scale analysis than was previously possible, enabling ever more complex queries and questions to be asked. This includes mapping new relationships between different datasets as well, contributing to the potential to discover new, previously unattainable, critical insights into infrastructure systems.

So what does this mean for government and public sector projects?

By 2020, the ITRC national infrastructure portal will be open to academia and industry as well as policymakers, providing access to infrastructure datasets, simulation and modelling results.

ITRC is already working with UK government, private sector, and overseas governments on projects including providing the analytical framework for the assessments carried out by the UK's National Infrastructure Commission for the UK's National Grid, HS2, Department for Transport, Defra, JBA on the risk of bridge scouring and floods, Caribbean Islands' infrastructure needs with the UN, and Tanzania's transport links with the World Bank.

This system-of-systems approach allows ITRC to explore a multitude of visualisation methods and technologies across sectors rather than being restricted to single sectors. Six different sector models are already in the database: transport, energy demand, energy supply, water supply, waste water, and solid waste.

Mapping interdependencies

The ability to map relationships between infrastructure assets also creates the opportunity to more easily carry out dependency and interdependency-based analysis.

This is critical for the Infrastructure Research Transitions Consortium as mapping and modelling systemic cascading failure across interdependent infrastructures or sectors is an essential part of its work to help safeguard the vital infrastructure upon which UK and global economy, health and communications depend.

For example, looking how the failure of electricity sub-stations would impact on other critical national infrastructure, including transport systems, water supply, telecommunications, health, education and business services.

The NISMOD-DB++ handling of infrastructure networks spatially allows models and simulation to be developed that can assess the locational vulnerability of infrastructure. This will allow new approaches to assessing infrastructure network resilience to be developed and to deliver new insights around infrastructure.

NISMOD will be used by governments, private sector companies, economists and researchers interested in the future of infrastructure systems and effects over time, from climate effects to economic scenarios and population dynamics.

The data will help inform the analysis, planning and design of national infrastructure in the UK and overseas, leading to more informed and economical decisions, and for modelling to be developed to help future-proof projects. Infrastructure Research Transitions Consortium: www.itrc.org.uk Email: enquiries@itrc.org.uk

ENGIE establishes Responsible Business Charter and Independent Scrutiny Board

ENGIE, the leading energy and services Group, has established a new Responsible Business Charter and independent Scrutiny Board, further underlining the company's commitment to operate to the highest economic, social and environmental standards.

The Charter ensures that ENGIE will make commitments in the four areas of fair business growth, transparency and accountability, being a fair employer, and supporting our communities and environment. The Charter responds to the need for the business to demonstrate how it contributes to society more widely.

The company's adherence with the Responsible Business Charter will be overseen by the newly established independent

Scrutiny Board, chaired by Lord Bob Kerslake. The Scrutiny Board will report back to ENGIE's UK Executive Board and be supported and independently validated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

The four commitments will be validated by supporting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on key issues including, speed of supplier payments, fair executive pay, customer satisfaction, pension obligations, environmental and social responsibility, diversity and inclusion, and living wage.

Wilfrid Petrie, CEO of ENGIE UK, said: "Operating in a responsible and transparent manner has been absolutely fundamental to ENGIE's operations, and I am proud that we have formally established this commitment through the Responsible Business Charter.



I believe that the Charter and work of the Scrutiny Board will establish a new industry standard helping us to lead in responsible business practice."

Lord Bob Kerslake, Chair of the Scrutiny Board said: "UK energy and service companies are facing evermore public scrutiny of their business, so it is extremely encouraging that ENGIE has acted pro-actively to strengthen their

business practices. I and the other Scrutiny Board members are looking forward to working with ENGIE to ensure they continue to operate for the benefit of all their stakeholders."

More information on the Responsible Business Charter and Scrutiny Board can be found at www.engie.co.uk/responsiblebusiness.

ENGIE enters local authority energy white label market with Cheshire West and Chester Council's 'Qwest Energy'

ENGIE, the leading energy and services Group, has signed its first energy white label contract with a local authority - Cheshire West and Chester - to supply householders across the north-west of England from a new local energy platform called Qwest Energy.

The proposition sees ENGIE become the first private sector business to partner with a local authority to launch into the local energy company market for four years - after a series of council-only owned initiatives. Qwest Energy has been developed through Qwest Services; Cheshire West and Chester Council's joint venture company, set up in 2015, to provide expertise in facilities

management, customer services, workplace solutions and digital transformation across the region.

Qwest Energy aims to help local residents save money on their energy bills, with a specific focus on reaching out to disengaged and vulnerable customers. For every new customer, Qwest Energy will provide a contribution to a Qwest Energy Community Fund. The new platform will leverage ENGIE's existing infrastructure, which is already serving over 75,000 home energy customers across the UK.

Paul Roberts, Managing Director of ENGIE's home energy business said: "For our first local energy launch we are delighted to be providing our services to



Cheshire West and Chester and to be providing a unique range of propositions tailored to the specific requirements of the area - backed by our desire to make a difference for those most in need. We see this venture as a long-term partnership for the benefit of residents across the whole region."

Andrew Lewis, Chief Executive at Cheshire West and Chester Council added: "Qwest Energy will support thousands of residents, the community and the environment for years to come. Not only does it offer an affordable option for residents, but the Community Fund will help tackle important issues like fuel poverty."

OutSystems enables Hackney Council to enhance its digital services

Hackney Council can now build mobile applications 50 percent faster using the OutSystems platform

OutSystems, provider of the number one platform for low-code development, today announced that Hackney London Borough Council is using the OutSystems platform to enhance its digital services. Hackney Council is the local government authority for the London Borough of Hackney and one of the largest London borough councils with more than 3,500 staff. With OutSystems, the Council is building and delivering a number of important applications that will support tenants and leaseholders in its housing estate which comprises 28,000 homes and 32,000 tenancy leaseholders.

Hackney Council selected OutSystems over other vendors because it demonstrated a number of strengths. Matthew Cain, Head of Digital and Data, comments, "One of my early tasks when I joined Hackney Council in 2017 was to understand the digital architecture of the council, and while it was quite robust and sophisticated, it was also out of date in certain areas. Having had previous experience of low-

code platforms, I was keen to understand the potential scope of low-code and rapid application development in supporting Hackney's ambition to deliver better services." The new initiative with OutSystems will enable the delivery of digital capabilities to its housing estate and is a part of Hackney Council's ambition to move online to improve customer services and reduce costs. The first product, "Manage My Rent Account" is a mobile application that has been designed for more than 8,500 tenants of Hackney properties. Hackney Council is also in the final stages of private beta for another application called "Manage My Tenancy," which has been specifically designed for officers who look after Hackney's housing estate. Both applications will enable tenants and housing officers to manage their rent accounts and estates remotely.

"We invited OutSystems along with a couple of other vendors to demo their platforms. We were immediately struck with

the flexibility of OutSystems UX," said Cain. It is really important that we continuously improve the experiences that our users have in order for them to succeed unaided. We were also impressed by the openness of the product and its ability to access data via the rest API points."

OutSystems was awarded the contract and worked in partnership with Hackney Council to refine its requirements. Hackney was impressed with the OutSystems approach and viewed the project as a true co-design effort. The platform has enabled developers to speed up their pace of work and have a deeper understanding of user needs. Matthew adds, "OutSystems is a valuable enabler allowing our developers to produce high quality solutions quickly. We have a number of graduate and apprentice developers and the speed that they are now able to work and the quality and consistency of their output is amazing."

Matthew explains, "We expect

to develop one new app per quarter over the next 12 months. Previously, we were lucky if we could develop two apps in a year, so we have doubled our capability to deliver apps faster to the business."

Hackney Council is also evaluating the role that OutSystems can play in supporting its internal systems, such as systems to manage joiners, movers, and leavers. Matthew concludes: "How digital we are right now is not an easy question to answer. We have a lot of web forms and IT-enabled processes, but there is still an extensive program of work to ensure our services meet our users' needs. Our goal is to deliver high-quality end-to-end digital services for our residents and staff, and OutSystems will certainly help us meet this ambition."

Visit: www.outsystems.com



Barnsley Council opens pet crematorium

Barnsley Council is believed to be the first council to open a pet crematorium.

The crematorium will provide individual cremations for pets in a secluded area at Cannon Hall Park in Barnsley, which is owned and operated by the council. Councillor Roy Miller will officially open the crematorium at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Thursday 8 November.

The ambitious plans were first submitted in June 2017 to generate vital income to pay for council services and formed part of the council's 'Future Council 2020' initiative, set out in 2016 to drive growth.

Currently pet cremations are arranged by local vet practices and carried out by private firms, with pet owners from Barnsley and the surrounding areas having to travel as far as Doncaster to arrange an individual cremation for their pet.

The idea to have a pet crematorium on the site of Cannon Hall Museum, Park & Gardens was praised by Arts Council England as an example of 'innovation and new ways of working'.

Cllr Roy Miller, Cabinet Spokesperson for Place at Barnsley Council, said: "Cannon Hall is a special place for dog lovers and their families, with

thousands of people visiting the beautiful park and gardens each year.

"At Barnsley Council we have many years' experience in delivering bereavement services and we understand how distressing the loss of a pet can be. The crematorium will ensure a high-quality service to meet the wishes of pet owners in Barnsley and the surrounding areas within the picturesque grounds of Cannon Hall."

The pet crematorium will ensure pets are carefully cremated on their own, and their ashes prepared personally by staff in accordance with their owners' wishes.

People can choose to scatter their pet's ashes or place a small memorial plaque in a special woodland area of the park. A farewell room has also been built where owners can go to discuss their requirements or say their last goodbye.

The pet crematorium service will be available through the council from 1 November, providing a dignified cremation for dogs, cats and other small animals. Prices will start from around £80. More information can be found at: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/petcrematorium>

Problem potholes

By Andrew Walker, Business Development Manager, Swarco Traffic Ltd



Potholes. Everyone has an opinion. Local newspapers are often deluged with stories of unhappy road users with punctured tyres, damaged wheels and suspension or worse as a result of a modern-day and very first-world scourge. Insurance companies and local authorities are often at loggerheads over responsibilities and liabilities, and who should carry the cost. One cycling charity claimed that UK Councils have paid out some £43 million in compensation claims over the last five years, and that is in raw costs alone; it does not take into account the council employees' time for handling each case.

Such has been the media backlash that many Local Authorities have been forced to take action, using up scant resources (council spending on highways and transport has fallen by almost 40% over the last six years according to NAO official

statistics) to patch and mend, often on a seemingly random and ad-hoc basis, to prove that the voice of the consumer is being listened to, and something is being done. The Gov.uk website has a dedicated 'report a pothole' section, and details of how you can claim compensation for injuries caused by roads in a poor state of repair. There is even an organisation known as fillthathole.org.uk to make it easier to report potholes and road defects and claim that 'councils are often quick to respond'.

But whereas local councils may indeed be 'quick to respond' when alerted to a pothole, they do not always appear to show the same alacrity when it comes to repairing and maintaining road signs, and specifically those electronic signs that warn of potential dangers or obstacles ahead. Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) and Variable Message Signs (VMS) are increasingly being used at dangerous junctions to prevent serious accidents, or to warn of flooded roads and low bridges to

keep the UK traffic moving safely on the roads. But even the best technologies can sometimes go wrong, especially if they are not regularly serviced and maintained. The trouble is, you won't know there's a problem until they fail to work, and by then it may be too late.

There is a recent example concerning a bridge in Leicestershire. Vehicle Activated Signs were installed on various approach roads to the bridge, to divert high-sided vehicles away from the danger. Unfortunately, the signs failed to work when they were most needed, allegedly through lack of maintenance, causing yet another vehicle to strike the bridge, with the resultant chaos that ensued. Roads were closed, obliging local traffic to take lengthy detours. Local businesses were affected, and the media swift to point the finger of blame. The point of this example, however, is that this incident was thoroughly avoidable and need not have happened at all.

There is no doubt Councils

are faced with a Hobson's choice when it comes to making decisions on where budgets are spent. There is only so much money in the coffers. But whereas money always seems to be available for the larger, capital projects, and through various parties from the Highways Agency through to local developers, budgets are harder to come by for ongoing maintenance and repair, and it often seems to be a case of 'he who shouts loudest gets heard'.

What is needed is a radical re-think on how budgets are set aside for ensuring digital road signs are always performing on the top line, and don't let you down when they are needed. There also needs to be further thought given to signage equipment obsolescence and having a clear strategy for future upgrades. Failing to do so could end up costing you much more than you bargained for.

Pittman becomes sole authorised distributor for impact recovery systems in UK and Ireland

Pittman Traffic and Safety Equipment has announced that it has secured the sole authorised distributorship for Impact Recovery Systems, a global manufacturer of traffic safety products. Pittman is now expanding its market-leading portfolio with the introduction of a new range of long-lasting, fully impactable bollards, delineators and lane separators that reduce replacement costs and deliver higher levels of traffic safety.

According to Michael Cooke, Sales Manager at Pittman Traffic and Safety Equipment: "We are delighted to be working with Impact Recovery Systems, an iconic brand with a proven track

record over the last 20 years with local authorities and car park operators in both the UK and Ireland. These high quality bollards work well with our existing modular rubber traffic calming systems and enable us to offer one of the industry's widest ranges of highway equipment and street furniture."

The new Metroflex Delineator Bollard can be installed in minutes and is available in single or double-sided formats with arrow stickers that can be mounted as required. The bollards have excellent recovery properties to reduce damage to impacting vehicles and minimise the need for ongoing maintenance.

The Impact Recovery System FLEX POST is the other key

product in the range. This tough and durable post is designed to withstand the harsh conditions in motorway and dual carriageway applications. Easy to install, it bends all the way to the ground on impact before returning to its original position and provides an ideal solution for exit lanes, traffic lane separation and junctions.

Pittman has included the new range in its online catalogue which has dedicated categories enabling the products to be easily viewed and purchased. The best-selling items from the Impact Recovery range are now in stock at the company's UK and Irish warehouses for speedy delivery to site.

The catalogue can be accessed at www.pittmantraffic.co.uk



NHSBSA extends scanning services to help primary and secondary care providers digitally transform

- Projects with North Bristol NHS Trust and Newcastle Gateshead CCG already won
- Scanning services offered at a competitive cost given the NHS is supplying the NHS
- Focus on solutions for GP's Lloyd George files



Martin Kelsall, NHSBSA

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) announces today that it is to offer competitively priced and comprehensive scanning services to all primary and secondary care organisations in the NHS to support and enhance their digital transformation initiatives.

A clear opportunity exists for the NHSBSA to digitise paper-based medical records irrespective of whether they are at Acute Trusts or in Lloyd George envelopes stored in GP surgeries.

This is a natural progression for the NHSBSA and will utilise the considerable skills, resources and investment in scanning infrastructure built up over many years processing the nation's paper prescriptions.

While volumes have been steadily reducing with the introduction of the Electronic Prescription Service, processing paper prescription forms and making payments to chemists is still a major workload.

Every year, GPs write out 500 million prescription forms with pharmacists dispensing over 1 billion items. The NHSBSA scans and processes the forms and authorises payments of over £9 billion for these services.

Given this, the NHSBSA has become one of the largest

scanning bureaus in Europe by volume with a fleet of different document capture solutions able to cope with any scanning job. This includes IBML's ImageTrac5 scanners and SoftTrac software – designed for ultra-high speed document throughput.

Martin Kelsall, NHSBSA's director of primary care services, says, "As prescriptions become electronic, we now have the capacity to help other NHS organisations deal with their paper challenges. Medical records are an obvious starting point. And given we are NHS servicing the NHS, the whole process of engagement is easier, faster and cheaper compared to using commercial third parties."

The NHSBSA will offer NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups an end to end bespoke document management service which includes:

- Collection of documents;
- Scanning of paperwork in black & white, colour or a mixture (as an option) using Intelligent Character Recognition software;
- Provision of relevant analytics and meta data;
- Quality assurance checking;
- Returning of paper files or secure destruction;
- Provision of digital images using encrypted discs, point to point

or via a secure cloud service.

To prepare for this, the NHSBSA has rationalised its offices and will be moving to a new 58,663 sq ft warehouse facility in Newcastle to make more efficient use of space.

The intention is to reconfigure some of its IBML ImageTrac5 scanners from processing prescriptions – which they currently each do at around 20,000 per hour – so that they can handle other documents. This work is being managed in tandem with IBML's UK service and support partner, Alaris, a Kodak Alaris business.

Steve Clarke, Alaris' public sector solutions manager, says, "The NHSBSA is transitioning from digitising one major paper process – namely prescriptions – and moving to scanning other paperwork like medical records. It demonstrates the flexibility and capability of IBML capture solutions and how a broader range of documents can be processed."

Clear return on investment working with the NHSBSA

Engaging with the NHSBSA for document scanning services delivers a variety of benefits:

- Simplified and easier

procurement given the NHSBSA is a public sector NHS body as well as being listed on the NHS LPP Framework. This demonstrates that it offers value for money;

- Scanning services that are competitively priced given the NHSBSA is a not for profit organisation. This covers secure transportation, scanning, storage and return or destruction and access to relevant software;
- Greater financial flexibility as it is the NHS servicing the NHS. The NHSBSA enables Trusts to realise savings from closing medical libraries, removing delivery vans and reorganising their staff;
- History and track record of scanning documentation with meets public sector governance rules;
- A team of in-house experts with the document preparation and scanning skills offering appropriate solutions, as this is rarely about scanning every document.
- A flexible and adaptable approach based upon the knowledge and understanding that primary and secondary care requirements will continually change.



NHSBSA already selected for scanning services

Scanning services are now available for the wider NHS, with two organisations already selecting the NHSBSA as their approved supplier:

• Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Following a direct award, the NHSBSA is digitising all primary care records in Newcastle and Gateshead for 293,602 patients. This involves collecting and scanning all Lloyd George envelopes from 35 GP practices and processing around 44 million documents.

• North Bristol NHS Trust (NBT).

Further to a thorough and competitive procurement process, the NHSBSA will process patient medical records so that one of the largest hospitals in the UK is paper free at the point of care. A scan-on demand approach is being adopted so that only the folders required for active patients are processed. Each month, around 2.2 million documents are digitised along with 10,000 for the Bristol Genetics Laboratory. It is expected that 400,000 patient records will be scanned over the contract duration

equating to 60 million documents.

Neil Darvill, director of Informatics, North Bristol NHS Trust, says, "We've been working alongside the NHSBSA for the last 2 years. Throughout this process, they have demonstrated an ability to fully understand our requirements, piloting the service initially and then helping us to develop a full service specification. We've developed a strong working relationship through regular, open and transparent communication. As a fellow NHS organisation, the NHSBSA naturally instilled confidence in their IG processes, procedures and practices which is of critical importance. They are providing an outstanding service that represents real value for money for the Trust."

The goal is to remove Lloyd George records in primary care

Moving forward, the NHSBSA's aspiration is to support Primary Care transition away from the need to store paper records. Administrative staff avoid wasting time dealing with paper records and removing racking for notes means creating more space for clinical interventions which will

help practices meet their ever increasing and complex workload demands.

One option being considered is to create a national and centralised storage solution for all GP's Lloyd George records - using cloud technology – with browser-based access to authorised users rather than envelopes being physically shifted around the country as patients change surgeries

It is obligatory for GP practices to keep them although they are generally not used in patient consultations. GPs refer to the information when reports are written for solicitors, insurers and others officials and access to historical notes are needed. Digitisation and removal of Lloyd George envelopes is a logical step given they are the last non-computerised area in most surgeries. The benefits are immediate: practice efficiency and space realisation.

Martin Kelsall, says, "A national solution, offered via the cloud and run by the NHS for the NHS makes total sense. This would eventually eradicate the need to transport paper files between practices, offer total interoperability, allow access across organisational boundaries and meet the needs of any future

integrated care system. A flexible and simple solution on a national scale would be far more cost effective than numerous CCGs or practices working independently. This option also removes the reliance on third parties who charge to integrate scanned documents into their IT systems and therefore keeps ownership of all images within the NHS family."

To facilitate this, the NHSBSA has the option to use specially created and easy to use Lloyd George software from CCube Solutions – a British firm with expertise implementing electronic document management systems in the NHS, including an established track record delivering Lloyd George records digitally for CCGs and GPs directly.

Ashley Keil, IBML's sales director, Northern & Western Europe, Africa & India, says, "Intelligent information capture is what sets IBML apart irrespective of the document type. Our solutions handle documents quickly on the fly with business rules applied at the moment of capture so that customers like the NHSBSA can automate how paperwork is scanned, indexed and processed so as to keep operational costs down."

Co-operative – it's the one word that leaps out at you as soon as you set foot in the door at Oldham Council.

With a clear vision – a focus on working co-operatively – at the heart of every message you receive when you start working here, you really can't miss it.

Residents see it too. Almost every campaign, poster, news story and video contains a nod to our co-operative ethos.

And it isn't just words; people live and breathe it.

Our Council Leader, Sean Fielding, and the Chief Executive, Dr Carolyn Wilkins, strive to promote the message continually on a day-to-day basis.

Under their leadership there is now a very clear framework of co-operative services running

throughout the organisation and the wider borough.

Internally, for example, Dr Wilkins has become a champion for our internal health and wellbeing programme: "Fit for Oldham".

In the spirit of co-operation, Fit for Oldham brings together people, business and partners to provide improved health and wellbeing services for our team from exercise sessions to flu jabs.

The programme is working wonders. It has seen more than 1,000 staff taking part and joining our leisure provider, Oldham Community Leisure, over a two year period with sickness absence

levels coming down.

Externally, Cllr Fielding also leads a huge range of projects bringing the community together in the co-operative spirit.

Take Get Oldham Active, our resident-facing health and wellbeing campaign.

Within that, he and cabinet colleagues have overseen a project that mirrors Fit for Oldham, bringing together a range of providers, businesses and community organisations to boost residents' access to health and wellbeing services.

So what can we do, as a Procurement team, to mirror that co-operative approach across

both everything Oldham Council buys and in ensuring our key delivery partner, Unity Partnership, does the same?

Well, with the two organisations working together, and backed by our supportive cabinet member, Cllr Abdul Jabbar, we identified two key areas:

- A new social values strategy
- Local SME engagement

New social values strategy

The Social Values Act became law in 2012, putting the onus on us to have consideration of how the delivery of contracts can be broadened to support the local community.

The sector has tended to do that by including social values as part of the qualitative procurement

scoring process, with some councils apportioning up to a 20 per cent weighting.

This weighting can easily determine the outcome of the tender evaluation and, more often than not, the actions that are specified are never monitored or measured.

The challenge for many professionals in the sector, therefore, is how can you score social values responses fairly and accurately as they can be so subjective?

Who are we to give a higher score to a bidder that offers to paint a local drop-in day centre compared to a company that is offering resources to a Youth Club?

We have therefore decided to completely remove this subjectivity



be tendered within the next few weeks. We explained the scope of services that would be included within the agreement along with the procurement plan. This imminent opportunity created the urgency we needed to generate widespread interest.

2. We showed slides of different elements of the selection questionnaire telling the audience what was required to submit a compliant bid.
3. A demonstration followed of how to access and use the e-tendering platform, ensuring that companies who had never bid for our business knew how they could take part.
4. We presented a pipeline of contracts that would be tendered over the next 12 months, giving this visibility to the local market enabling them to think about how they could resource themselves to bid for these opportunities.
5. Finally we brought in our "Get Oldham Working" business team informing the audience about the support that they offer to the local business community.

The second part of the event was for networking, giving suppliers the opportunity to speak to our team.

Further events are now being planned to continue to break down those barriers and equip local companies with the knowledge and connections they need to tender for our business, either on their own or as part of a co-operative project.

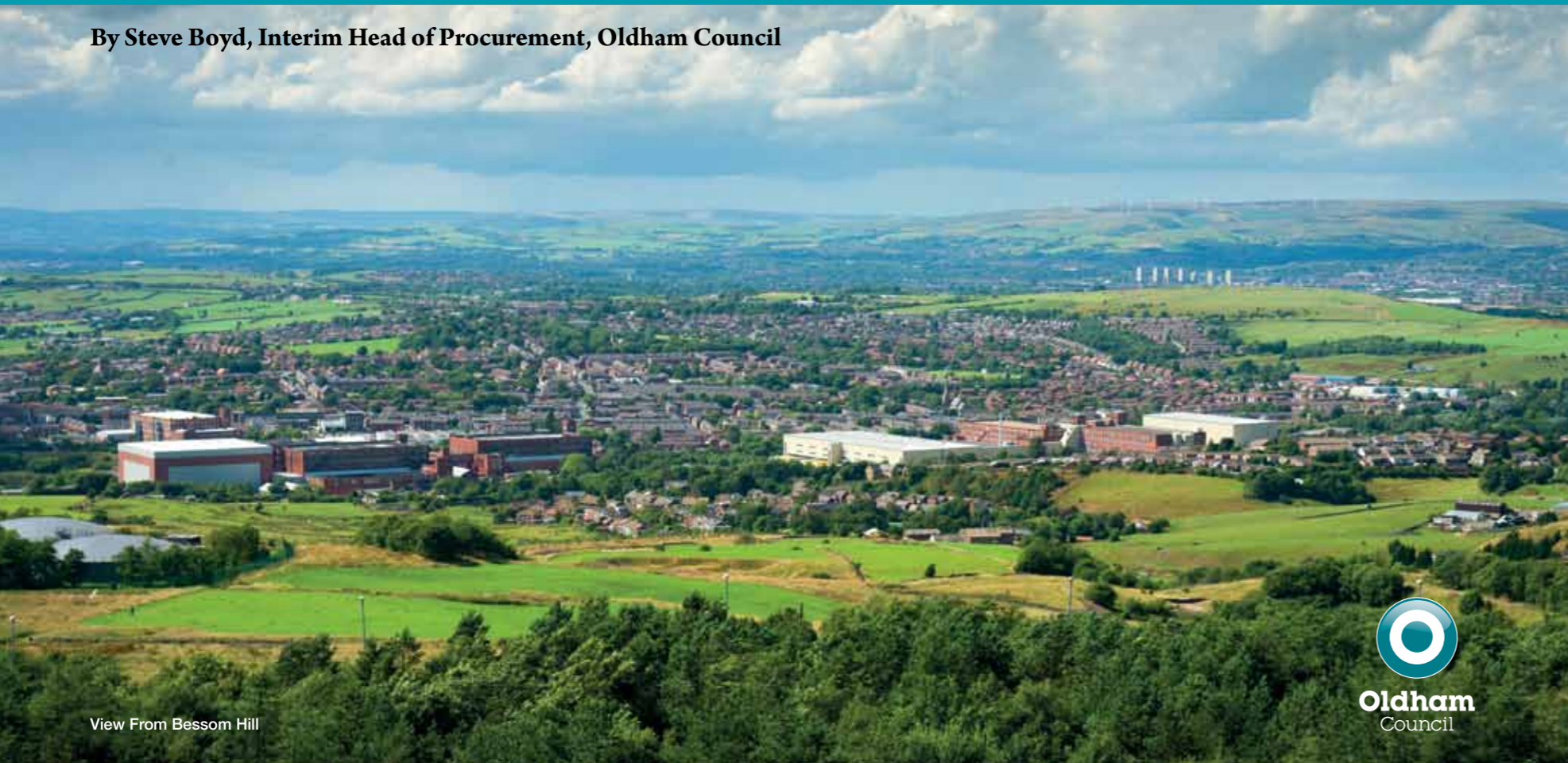
With large construction projects we are faced with a different challenge – Oldham as an area does not have a presence of companies that can deliver these large programmes of work.

So, to overcome this, we will concentrate on the tiers of companies used within the delivery chain of suppliers.

Working with the prime contractor we will host events detailing the opportunities that exist within the supply chain, in the hope that they too can work together co-operatively to help us achieve our aims.

A caring council - buying the co-operative way

By Steve Boyd, Interim Head of Procurement, Oldham Council



View From Bessom Hill



and not score social values as part of tender evaluations.

Instead we will now mandate them into our tenders at a high level.

In this way, our suppliers will be required to deliver social initiatives as part of the contract delivery; we build it into the specification.

From there we will add in specific contractual clauses to make it a contractual obligation.

Bidding organisations will still be required to submit social initiatives as part of their bid but this element will not form part of the quality evaluation.

Instead the winning bidder will hold discussions with our Policy Team about their social value initiatives.

If they can together identify an alternative solution that will bring more value, then the terms of the contract will enable them to do this.

This approach brings greater transparency and certainty.

With larger projects, it takes in an even broader range of partners to drive social value.

Think hospitals, housing associations, educational establishments and emergency services all looking at co-operative apprenticeship schemes.

Local SME Engagement

Like most local authorities, we want to put as much of our budget as possible back into the town and procurement is always a key enabler to achieve this.

A good example of our commitment was our recent local supplier summit which involved both ourselves and our delivery partner, Unity Partnership, which runs our property, highways, IT and other services.

Advertised through our e-tendering portal as well as the press, our website and social media, it was a great success, bringing together more than 120 companies.

To maximise this opportunity we scheduled the event using these five stages:

1. We advertised a multi-lot framework for minor works, to

Price, performance and value - how effective tendering can give you the best of all worlds

“If you buy cheap, you buy twice”: It's a home truth that's often borne out in everyday life, but while taking a faulty bargain kettle back to the shop can prove an inconvenience, cutting corners in procuring long term service contracts can have a significant and lasting impact on a business. Even so, tales of poor service and squabbles over what's in and out of scope in years two and three of service delivery are all too common and it's invariably true that such issues often arise from a poor procurement process.

As competitive pressures ratchet up the need to do more with less, businesses will always seek new ways to make budgets stretch further, yet buying services also has to provide businesses with the flexibility to respond to new challenges. In outdoor FM services, the extremes of hot and cold weather over the past year is a case in point. Last winter was one of the UK's coldest and harshest in years, creating huge demand for professional Winter Gritting and Snow Clearance services to keep sites safe and open for business. This was followed by a long, hot, dry summer that provided new challenges in planning and delivering effective Grounds Maintenance as the grass dried out and the hedges grew more rapidly.

So, with the natural environment doing its bit to further tax the resources and budget allocated to outdoor FM services, how do you still stay within budget? More importantly, how can one build the necessary responsiveness into the procurement process to ensure you buy services that are truly fit for purpose, sufficiently flexible and that don't create unnecessary risk downstream?

Here are some essential tips to help balance these demands and succeed in procurement:

1. You've got to be 100% clear on what you need. Understand what "good" looks like: Buying a service is not the same as buying a product, and your specification needs to be as explicit as possible about your requirements, expectations and measurement. A vague specification will inevitably lead to inconsistent pricing from potential service partners due to varying interpretations of service requirements; this naturally favours suppliers who choose to assume that the minimum level applies and price accordingly.
2. Give some real thought to what's important to you and make sure your procurement process is designed to consider those things. It's amazing how often the pre-ambles in tender documents talk about what's important to an organisation but there is no reference to these elements in the tender questions. If sustainability is a key driver, you need to evaluate the credentials of your potential service providers in the tender process.
3. Asking tender questions that tell you what you need to know whilst meeting the obligation to do an "apples for apples" comparison is a bit of a dark art. For high value complex requirements, it may be worth engaging a specialist procurement consultant; this will help to ensure that your process delivers the best possible outcome in terms of both quality and price.
4. Finally, and most importantly of all, think really carefully about the evaluation weightings between cost and quality. If the weightings are skewed toward cost you will inevitably risk falling into the procurement

equivalent of "buying cheap, buying twice" trap. Even at 60% cost/40% quality the lowest price will always win, which may be appealing in the here and now, but you need to consider if the cheapest price will be sustainable over the life of the contract. If you really want a quality solution, you need to give it a higher rating and use the specification to make your requirements fit the budget.

We are now entering the main buying season for Grounds Maintenance services and this is the time to start pulling your tender together. This is also the best opportunity to really think about what you need from your Grounds Maintenance service and how this will work within your budget. As well as talking to your key stakeholders and understanding their requirements,



why not also consult with the potential supply chain, before you are in the confines of the tender process, to get a feel for the art of the possible from the experts. This will enable you to accurately articulate your requirements in the tender process and facilitate an evaluation of cost against comparable service levels. Taking

this step will allow you to shape a process that can still reveal the providers that are able to deliver the service at a lower cost – or even the lowest cost, but it will also ensure that you can understand how that pricing is being achieved. After all, there's nothing inherently bad about buying cheap, and if a lower cost is the result of better productivity and efficiency then this is truly the ideal outcome for all parties. That's what good procurement looks like.

For further advice contact the GRITIT team:
www.gritit.com
Telephone: 0800 0432 911
Email: info@gritit.com

Genmed strengthens its board with new senior appointments

Genmed, a provider of vendor neutral managed services to the NHS, today announces the appointment of Jonathan Wedgbury as chairman and Geoff Baker as a non-executive director.

With rapid growth year on year, Genmed is strengthening the board to focus on its strategic positioning and operational execution to meet the significant growth opportunities within the NHS along with healthcare markets internationally. It is bringing onto its board individuals with extensive business and healthcare expertise to support the development of the company.

With over 35 years of commercial and procurement experience, Jonathan Wedgbury has held a range of senior roles in the health sector. A former commercial director for the West Midlands Regional Health Authority, he was appointed chief executive of NHS Healthcare Purchasing Consortium (HPC) in 2001 – an organisation he created and launched which was one of if not the first procurement consortiums within the NHS.

Here he was responsible for all procurement and supply chain expenditure for the West Midlands along with North Central London Strategic Health Authority. This involved managing in total an annual non-pay spend budget of around £3.8 billion where he delivered a four to one ROI benefit to customers. This was achieved through rationalisation, standardisation and, of course, strategies to drive down costs.

To better serve customers, Jonathan then led the divestment of NHS HPC in 2011 to Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) – the largest privately owned hospital system in the world with revenues of over \$41 billion. NHS HPC was rebranded Health Trust Europe LLP with the company becoming HCA's group purchasing organisation in

addition to servicing organisations in other industries, working with companies such as the Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. He was appointed its chief executive.

Jonathan has a thorough understanding of the UK, European and North American healthcare sectors having worked at hospital, regional and national levels. After leaving Health Trust Europe in 2017, he then gained mergers and acquisition experience working in private equity alongside Tower Brook Capital Partners.

Commenting on his appointment as chairman, Jonathan says, "Genmed provides much needed capital to the NHS via their managed service contracts and delivers an unique service to the NHS. Trusts get the latest equipment at reduced cost not only because of the reclamation of VAT but through Genmed's ability to negotiate and drive down prices. Moving forward, our objective is to solidify

grown and sold two successful consultancy and managed services businesses – ATL Group, a technical services firm in the industrial, defence and oil and gas markets and Plant Asset Management (PAM) which he co-founded with finance provide by Petrofac, a FTSE 100 multinational oil services company. He was responsible for growing PAM from start-up to a turnover of £35 million and 280 staff with operations in Europe, America, Middle East and Australia until it was fully acquired by Petrofac in 2015.

Geoff is a former president of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and strong advocate for the encouragement of entrepreneurship within engineering. He now works extensively with Southampton University supporting its Future Worlds programme to mentor and advise start-ups about how they can be 'spun off' into commercial enterprises.

in the oil and gas sector have radically changed the way they're structured. They've focused on core business outsourcing non-core functions to external providers using global managed service agreements. Given my experience creating and developing companies, I'll be adding value and providing input about the disciplines, infrastructure, systems and processes that need to be developed by Genmed to support its ongoing business expansion."

Geoff started his career serving a five year mechanical engineering apprenticeship with the British Aircraft Corporation and graduated from Cranfield University with a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering.

Robin Modak, Genmed's chief executive officer, says, "Our company is growing extremely quickly and the appointment of Jonathan and Geoff is imperative to help with the structuring and resource planning required along



Left: Geoff Baker
Right: Jonathan Wedgbury

Genmed's position as the premier managed service provider to the NHS and look for opportunities to develop the business internationally given austerity measures in healthcare now touch Europe and beyond." Geoff Baker has been appointed as a non-executive director. He is an independent chartered engineer and entrepreneur who has successfully set up,

Furthermore, he was one of the founding non-executive directors of The FSE Group – formed by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) - to provide sources of finance and advice to UK companies who otherwise wouldn't be able to secure funding from traditional banking or venture capital routes.

Geoff says, "Over the past 10 to 15 years, the large multinationals

with having guidance and support to navigate the fast changing environment within the NHS from a regulatory and strategic perspective. This will ensure that we maintain our position at the forefront of innovation in vendor neutral managed services."

For further information, please visit www.genmed.eu

Toro pushes forward with new pull-behind rotary

Productivity of a pull-behind gang mower with advanced technology and cutting quality of a Toro Groundsmaster

Revolutionising the market by combining the productivity of a pull-behind gang mower with the advanced technology and cutting quality of a Toro Groundsmaster mower is Toro's new Groundsmaster 1200, which debuts at SALTEX on the Reesink Turfcare stand.

Jeff Anguige, Reesink's national sales manager, explains more: "Described by Toro as 'the only pull-behind rotary worthy of being a Groundsmaster', the Groundsmaster 1200 earns this definition from three fully articulating contour-following decks that ensure no matter how uneven the terrain, the cut is consistently good. Full front and rear rollers prevent scalping and

allow for turf striping and dual full width rollers leave a well-groomed after-cut appearance, rarely if ever seen in the sports and grounds care sectors from a gang mower."

The height of cut can be adjusted from 0.5 to 4 inches, and productivity is high with a 12ft cutting width plus the machine's ability to cut 8.73 acres an hour at 6mph. The cutting decks feature the trusted spindles of a Toro Groundsmaster mower's heavy-duty shafts and dual tapered roller bearings for unmatched ruggedness.

Designed to make the operators' life easy, the Groundsmaster 1200's wing decks fold up to create a narrow

86-inch transportation width which means it can be easily manoeuvred onto trailers and vans for movement between sites. Plus, the transport wheels feature a torsion axle and integrated torsion spring to make movement when working smoother.

Similarly, bidirectional impact absorption technology cushions and protects the individual cutting decks against damage from inadvertent contact with obstacles while mowing, an all-too-often occurrence when it comes to cutting playing fields, verges and parks.

Jeff continues: "A pull-behind mower has the unbeatable benefit of adding value to existing machinery, which, in the

grounds care market where value and productivity are paramount, is hugely appealing. The fact that the speedy, large area cutting of the GM1200 brings with it the quality of cut of a Toro Groundsmaster mower, creates a winning combination."

The GM1200 is the perfect companion for Toro's new Outcross super-duty utility vehicle, which also launches at SALTEX. Jeff comments: "Toro understands its market and that today's grounds men need to do more with less, which is something both these machines offer in abundance. Plus, they complement each other so well."

Toro's Groundsmaster 1200 is described as 'the only pull-behind rotary worthy of being a Groundsmaster'. It's seen here being towed by Toro's new Outcross utility vehicle.



Greater Manchester health and social care moves ahead with Shaping Cloud engagement

Health and social care partnership set to make rapid procurement efficiencies whilst mapping out workforce and citizen benefits of moving to the cloud.

Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership (GMHSC Partnership) aims to deliver rapid savings and identify how the cloud can support the region's devolved vision for integrated health and care services through work with public sector IT specialists Shaping Cloud.

The company, which has already supported the cloud ambitions of global digital exemplar trusts Salford Royal and their fast follower Pennine Acute, is undertaking an 'asset review' that will baseline current infrastructure used across 20 NHS and local government organisations involved in the GMHSC Partnership.

This will identify what software applications are in use across the region and highlight opportunities for more cost-effective procurement practices to reduce duplication and leverage economies of scale for this landmark initiative.

The GMHSC Partnership is made up of NHS organisations and councils in the region, and is tasked with overseeing devolution and taking charge of the £6bn health and social care budget as well as a £450m transformation fund.

"Seeing what technology is in use across the public sector should mean the review will pay for itself in procurement efficiencies", according to GMHSC Partnership interim chief digital officer Stephen Dobson. "However, it is the wider benefits of cloud adoption that are more attractive," he says.

"Cloud is coming whether we like it or not. What I want to do is to accelerate the move to the cloud across Greater Manchester," said Dobson. "I'm trying to get to the future faster."

To help set out this future state, Shaping Cloud is conducting an enterprise architecture mapping exercise to identify current regional infrastructure. It will then develop a costed plan on what applications and storage can move to the cloud, indicating further potential financial savings and productivity benefits.

The asset review, scheduled for completion in the spring 2019, will also identify and address the need for organisations to have an information governance compliant asset register, as well as support workforce training and development needs that come with wider use of the cloud.

"The cloud will improve our ability to access what we need from wherever we are," said Dobson. "For example, if an NHS consultant is required in a different hospital, he or she can access the information and applications they require without the need for getting a new piece of kit, or another laptop belonging to that trust. That's a huge benefit both for staff and for the patient."

Stephen Dobson

For Dobson, the cloud should mean greater opportunities for flexible working and collaboration between the multidisciplinary teams that are increasingly required to deliver the region's integrated, person-centred care model. Overstretched IT teams will also benefit, spending less time managing multiple applications and infrastructure.

Once the infrastructure is in place, Dobson says the region will have a platform: "Where it will be easier to collaborate and improve the delivery of health and social care services.

"It's vital that we change how we use technology across our services. We must deliver on this, for the benefit of patients and our health and care workforce.

"Our partnership with Shaping Cloud will support us in achieving this and improve how we share data between organisations and access information. They really understand the challenges of delivering at scale and they have a genuine passion for service delivery."

Chosen for its experience in public sector IT, hybrid cloud and digital transformation, Manchester-based Shaping Cloud has already worked with some of the region's health and local authorities. It is now set to support Mayor Andy Burnham's vision of Manchester as the UK's leading digital city and deliver 'the greatest and fastest possible improvement to the health and wellbeing for the 2.8m people of Greater Manchester'.

Shaping Cloud will set the building blocks for appropriate and phased use of the cloud, which will then be taken forward across the region with the support of the region's digital board, which comprises senior leaders from Greater Manchester including

GMHSC Partnership chief officer Jon Rouse, Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust CEO Sir David Dalton, and Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust CEO Sir Michael Deegan.

Shaping Cloud Founder and CEO, Carlos Oliveira, said: "Being selected as the preferred supplier to GMHSC Partnership is testimony to what we can and shall deliver. We are privileged to work in an industry where our products and services have the power to improve people's lives.

"Our work with the partnership will create a blueprint for a modern IT infrastructure at an organisational, local and regional level. Leveraging the latest technologies, it will allow organisations to collaborate more effectively and be an enabler for the delivery of better services to the people of Greater Manchester.

"We're fully behind Greater Manchester's mission to improve the health and wellbeing of every citizen in the region. It's about people achieving their potential and amplifying Manchester's position as a world-class city. It's a big responsibility and one we're happy to help with."

The work sits alongside activity that sees Manchester improving network connectivity through early adoption of N3-successor the HSCN, investment in full fibre networks, and greater information sharing via its successful Local Health and Care Record Exemplar bid, which itself may benefit from using the cloud.

Openview installs new digital noticeboards for Stockport Homes

Stockport Homes is installing a new breed of digital noticeboards at residential tower block properties managed on behalf of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. These innovative new screens

are being installed in communal areas by OpenView Security Solutions and will provide real-time information to improve communications with residents.



As well as alerting residents about essential maintenance, the noticeboards also be used to provide information such as weather forecasts, events, meetings and other local news.

According to Matthew Platt, Asset Manager at Stockport Homes: "Having a successful longstanding partnership with OpenView Security Solutions, we asked them to recommend a digital solution that would enhance the way that we communicate with residents to alert them of works such as lift maintenance and other important information. This rolling programme of installations demonstrates our ongoing commitment to enhance service provision to all residents across Stockport."

The digital noticeboards,

manufactured by Intratone, comprise an IP65 rated 15 inch colour screen with options for surface or flush-fit mountings according to the requirements of each location. Installation is quick and easy as the noticeboards use GSM technology which eliminates the need for connections to fixed or wireless network infrastructures.

A free and secure cloud-based website enables the information displayed on the noticeboards to be updated remotely in real-time using any internet-enabled device without requiring site managers to visit each location individually.

Jack Wylie North UK Sales manager for Intratone, added: "It was a pleasure working with Openview on this project as the company really supported

the product from start to finish. Stockport Homes will now reap the benefits of this innovative solution by being able to communicate information with their residents quickly and easily." OpenView Security Solutions is the UK'S largest privately owned electronic security and electrical systems company and a leading provider of security, IT infrastructure, electrical and mechanical solutions to the public and private sectors. OpenView specialises in the provision of complete life cycle solutions including the design, installation and maintenance of the latest, fully compliant fire and electrical services.

For more information, please visit www.openviewgroup.com.



City of Bath achieves greater benefits from a multi-tasking digital video platform

As one of the UK's leading tourist destinations and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the City of Bath draws over 4.8 million visitors every day. This results in a

high volume of traffic which struggles to navigate the narrow streets seven days a week.

When Bath and North East Somerset Council (BATHNES) wanted to replace existing bus lane ANPR cameras which had reached their end of life, it developed a different procurement process in partnership with the overall parking strategy. This challenged suppliers to show how their proposed solutions would help the council update the technology, maximise enforcement effectiveness and deliver added value.

Videalert was selected as it offered a highly configurable digital video platform that integrated with Bath's city-wide fibre network allowing captured images to be efficiently transmitted from ONVIF-compliant HD IP cameras. Being hosted, it minimised the need for hardware to be installed on council premises and transferred the responsibility for ensuring cameras were always operational to Videalert which, as a software company, was focused more on meeting the council's specific objectives.

The Installation

Bus lane cameras were installed in seven bus lanes to keep public transport flowing and encourage people to leave their cars in park and rides, reducing both congestion and pollution. Multiple ANPR cameras were deployed in single long bus lanes, such as London Road, enabling contraventions to be captured through the entire length to increase coverage and achieve greater compliance. Cameras have also been installed in a major city centre car park and Park & Ride locations to assess demand,

occupancy and duration of stays, data that feeds into the council's UTMC to help guide drivers to the most appropriate parking locations.

The Benefits

The Videalert platform enables multiple contraventions to be handled in a fairer way. Instead of penalising drivers for multiple offences committed on the same journey, only a single PCN is issued, supporting the council's philosophy of educating rather than punishing motorists that fail to heed TROs.

The hosted platform provides both data gathering and enforcement and is complemented by a new Mobile Enforcement Vehicle that can be used tactically for a wide range of traffic management, monitoring and enforcement applications. Linked to the council's virtual permit database, the vehicle operates across residential parking zones to detect parked vehicles that do not have valid permits.

"The ONVIF compliant HD IP cameras have been a revelation, capturing high quality images in all light conditions resulting in greater accuracy of evidence packs and increased productivity by enabling enforcement to take place around the clock," commented Chris Major, Group Manager Transport & Parking. "This has also had a significant impact on reducing the number of appeals that are actively pursued, delivering further time and cost savings. In addition, detection rates for contraventions have increased on average by 13%."

The system now enables the council to demonstrate that its original objectives are being achieved and generates reports showing changing habits, behaviour and compliance levels. It also provides a data feed into the council's case management system which will allow the identification of congestion and contravention hotspots and the analysis of traffic flows. The Videalert platform will also help improve the management of coach parking after losing facilities for up to 45 vehicles to a major regeneration project. An advance booking system will ensure the availability of suitable parking spaces on a timed basis. Integration with the Videalert Digital Video Platform will direct coaches to booked bays and make visiting Bath a better experience for tourists and coach drivers alike as well as reducing the level of congestion on busy city streets.

Clean Air Zones

Clean Air Zones (CAZ) are high on the agenda of most cities as part of government initiatives to reduce air pollution with the Council issued a letter of direction in July 2017 requiring a final plan on how to achieve compliance in the shortest possible time and by no later than 31st December 2021. Bath's geographical position leads to a build-up of air pollution and hotspots have been identified where concentrations of toxic gases such as nitrogen dioxide generated by road traffic exceed the acceptable national and European limits. As part of the plan, the council is considering

implementing a CAZ where higher-emission vehicles may be charged.

The hosted Videalert platform provides real-time intelligence on the extent of contraventions by 'high' polluting vehicles to determine potential charging rates/bands prior to a CAZ being established, helping to achieve the optimum impact for improving air quality. It can automate the management and enforcement of CAZs, providing real-time identification of vehicles including make, model, colour, vehicle class emissions rating where appropriate and can determine whether an offence has been committed.

Conclusion

The system has met objectives to achieve greater productivity and maximised operational effectiveness. In conclusion, Chris Major added: "This upgrade helps reduce the journey times for public transport and improve air quality in the centre of Bath through smarter and more effective enforcement. Our goal is to integrate with other platforms to improve our understanding of changing driver behaviours and influence this to the benefit of residents, local businesses and visitors to Bath"

www.videalert.com
info@videalert.com





Trust Reesink to bring you more, again Four finance schemes with ten ways to buy Toro

Reesink Turfcare's four Toro finance schemes offering ten ways to pay launched last year and were so successful they're back again.

The reason for this success is, says Reesink national sales manager Jeff Anguige, because they allow customers to turn one new Toro machine into a fleet for the same year's budget: "Instead of buying one machine with your annual machinery replacement budget you put it towards a fleet. It's the cost-effective way to get the latest and best quality machinery you need, now. Plus, you get more of what you need for less."

All four schemes, which comprises Toro Triple Finance each with three payment options and an interest-free payment with

Buy Now Pay Later, have flexibility at their core, to provide a best scenario for everyone.

Toro Triple Finance is a firm favourite for Reesink Turfcare customers, offering three options, each with several payment plans to suit individual budgets and circumstances. All three options have payment spread over five years, but there are three ways to spread the payment within that timeframe. Choose from monthly or annually, with one- or five-months upfront payment; with a 15 percent payment of the final balance in the final month; or with a six month pause before payment starts with payments condensed into the remaining months or years left for the term.

Buy Now Pay Later is interest free for orders before the end November. For all machinery

bought between now and then, payment is required in full on 7 May 2019.

Jeff continues: "The ever-increasing importance of the role of finance in the acquisition of turf machinery is reflected strongly in these finance schemes offering customers plenty of options on how to fill or top-up their shed with the latest Toro machinery. We believe these finance options makes purchasing Toro equipment easy and affordable for every budget."

All deals are available now until 30 November 2018 to customers in the UK only and subject to acceptance. Those interested in taking up one of the four finance schemes should get in touch with Reesink on 01480 226800 or visit reesinkturfcare.co.uk/finance for more details.



Armour Comms and Global RadioData Communications partner to provide 24/7 support for Armour Mobile solution

Now available via the Government UK Digital marketplace G-Cloud



Armour Communications, a leading provider of specialist, secure communications solutions, has partnered with Global RadioData Communications (GRC) to provide a joint solution with 24/7 support. GRC has already secured its first two customers for the new combined solution that provides additional levels of security. The new service is available via the UK Government Digital Marketplace G-Cloud 10, under the cloud hosting, software and support framework listed as SCYTALE Armour Comms.

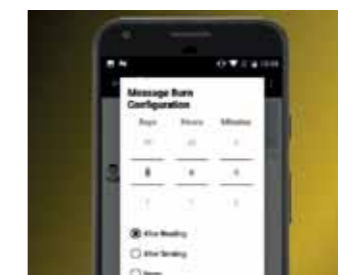
Subscribers to the GRC solution will be able to communicate with other white listed communities, typically, enabling different government departments to communicate securely using Armour Mobile. The service covers all Armour Mobile standard functionality, which includes voice calls, one-to-one and group messaging, voice and video conference calls, file attachments, sent/received/read message status, and Message Burn, a facility where the sender can set a message to disappear after a certain time (for example 5 minutes after it has been sent, or 10 minutes after it has been read by the recipient).

Steve Slater, Operations Director at GRC commented; "Armour Mobile provides the broadest range of secure communications features currently available for use on an ordinary smartphone, providing security that is transparent to the end user, something that is increasingly important to our user base. Services that provide a consumer-

grade look and feel with higher levels of assurance combined with the convenience of using the phone the user already has, means that making and receiving a secure call or communication does not disrupt normal working patterns, helping to ensure user adoption."

David Holman, a Director at Armour Comms stated; "GRC is our first partner to provide a 24/7 support service from its HQ. Increasingly, clients are demanding higher levels of assurance and support, and we are delighted to be working with GRC to meet this requirement."

Using a FIPS 140-2 validated crypto core, Armour Mobile has been awarded many certifications including Commercial Product Assurance (CPA) from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and is included in the NATO Information Assurance catalogue.



Dave Holman

Out and out innovation in the new Toro Outcross

Toro Outcross presents a new breed of turf maintenance vehicle

The Outcross, Toro's first super-duty utility vehicle, which launches at SALTEX on the Reesink Turfcare stand, is a machine that's been purpose-built to expand the operators' capacity for work, allowing them to do more with less.

Jeff Anguige, national sales manager for Reesink, says: "The launch of the Outcross 9060 marks the first of its kind to be purpose-built for the management of fine turf and means groundsman can do a lot more with less. Its revolutionary design combines the best elements of a tractor with a utility vehicle and delivers a machine that can do the work of multiple machines in one compact package."

Do more with less has to be the Outcross's strapline. Operators can do more with less equipment, more with less labour, more with less headaches, and more with less time. This super-sized, super-efficient workhorse saves you more in every way and the opportunities to maximise your investment are near endless.

Its sheer strength is astonishing. Delivering the power to tow

16,000lbs and an optional cargo bed that can hold 4,500lbs of materials is a 59 horsepower Yanmar liquid-cooled diesel engine.

And while, you'd be forgiven for thinking that towing such a weight might damage your turf, that's not the case with the Outcross. Unlike a tractor which can be unforgiving to the ground, the balanced chassis of the Outcross with its four-wheel drive steering functionality, in conjunction with the four-wheel drive makes sure of that.

As do the wheels, which are big, to disperse the weight of the machine and its cargo, and spin individually at a rate determined by the machine's ground speed and angle of turn. That means there's significantly less risk of scuffing and under or over-spinning.

Removing the need for front counterweights makes it significantly more delicate on fine turf than an agricultural equivalent, while its hydrostatic drive system eliminates the complicated controls and shifting commonly associated with a tractor.

Operation is simple and

intuitive: cruise control, shuttle shifting for clutch-free motion, a passenger seat and one-action controls add to the machine's ease-of-use and efficiency.

Plus, and this is a big perk, the Outcross brings the option of dozens of attachments to perform hundreds of tasks and accommodates multiple standard turf maintenance attachments. Loader buckets, pull-behind cylinder or rotary gang mowers, spreaders, aerators and forks can all be added thanks to a 3-point hitch with PTO, drawbar and universal loader mounting plate.

And that expands the operator's capacity for work to include mowing, spreading, loading, hauling, aerating, topdressing, towing, sweeping, pruning, blowing and chipping, all from the one machine. As well as

simplifying operation this enables the operator to set up and save the parameters for up to 16 attachments upfront and one at a time, which ensures the machine performs to exact specifications every time. And the upshot is different operators go out with the same settings every time, which is good for turf managers wanting consistency.

The result is a time-saving, multi-purpose, turf-friendly workhorse, that brings flexibility, consistency and productivity to all turf maintenance operations, says Jeff: "As with the entire grounds range, Toro focusses on productivity, versatility, flexibility and durability, and the Outcross is the perfect embodiment of all these things. It is without question a new breed of turf maintenance vehicle."

The Outcross, Toro's first super-duty utility vehicle, expands the operators' capacity for work, allowing them to do more with less.



Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council puts Videalert mobile enforcement vehicle on the road

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council has taken delivery of a new CCTV enforcement vehicle from Videalert, one of the UK's leading suppliers of intelligent traffic enforcement and management solutions. The new Mobile Enforcement Vehicle (MEV) has an unattended operating capability and will be used to enforce school locations where illegal parking on the yellow 'keep clears' has been identified as putting children's lives in danger.

Councillor Bob Norton, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Growth & Highways, said: "We know that measures to tackle parking are often controversial and

seen by some as a 'cash grab' but that is simply not the case. This is all about safety! Three accidents involving school children in one year is three too many and we won't allow this continuing risk to the safety of children in our schools. Our message is clear: Don't want to get fined? Then don't put people at risk when you park."

Videalert has supplied a white Renault Kadjar equipped with two roof-mounted ANPR cameras and two colour cameras to capture contextual video evidence. Used in conjunction with the latest video analytics, the system delivers the highest productivity at the lowest operating cost even in the highest density traffic environments. The on-board systems are controlled by the operator manning the

vehicle using a dashboard-mounted touchscreen.

All contravention evidence data is transferred to Videalert's Digital Video Platform in the parking office at the end of each shift. The Videalert system automates the construction of video evidence packs which are reviewed by trained council operatives prior to sending confirmed offences to the back office processing system for the issuance of PCNs.

Redcar and Cleveland's new mobile enforcement vehicle is also equipped with a complete suite of Videalert software applications enabling it to be used for a wide range of traffic and parking management applications in the future as required.

"In recent benchmarking trials, our MEVs equipped with four

cameras have proved to deliver industry-leading capture rates whilst consistently outperforming vehicles from other suppliers. This new generation of multi-purpose MEVs will give councils greater flexibility in the enforcement of a wide range of moving traffic and parking contraventions," added Tim Daniels, Sales and Marketing Director at Videalert.

For further information, please visit www.videalert.com



Dynama's organisational design and resource management software is awarded a place on G-Cloud 10

Dynama is delighted to announce that its organisational design, resource management and workforce optimisation software has been accepted onto the latest iteration of the UK Government's Digital Marketplace, G-Cloud 10. This coincides with the successful listing of Dynama on AusTender, the Australian Government's Procurement Information System. Dynama's proven track record of working

with some of the most respected organisations in the industry, means public sector and defence organisations around the world rely on its leading software to maximise the effectiveness of their skilled personnel, assets and surety of compliance, in often complex and diverse environments, safely and cost-effectively.

Dynama currently supports some of the most challenging operations in the public sector including the UK's Royal Fleet Auxiliary, NATO, US military and the Australian Defence Force. Most recently, the Dynama OneView application has been successfully deployed as NATO's new Automated Personnel Management System (APMS) providing organisational structure management, HR and logistic support to personnel across 29 Member Nations in Europe, North America and Allied Partners around the world. Dynama is also currently working in partnership with Andromeda Systems Incorporated and the US Department of Defense (DoD) to provide Dynama OneView, to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter programme. This is used to aggregate and visualise data for the entire programme, which encompasses over 2,700 aircraft, with their associated personnel and support equipment.

Andrew Carwardine, Managing Director of Dynama said, "We are proud to be accepted onto the Government's latest G-Cloud framework and to have the opportunity to share the benefits of our technology with those who keep us safe and secure on a daily basis. These vital service providers share the common challenges of deploying appropriately skilled staff to the right place often at short notice

and within budget constraints. With our fully automated solution which has been accepted by the Government's Digital Marketplace, public sector organisations can trust us to help them create robust organisational design, resource management and workforce optimisation strategies that boost efficiencies and control costs in a highly flexible way."

Dynama has over 25 years' experience of providing the specialist knowledge and technology necessary for both commercial, defence and government customers in heavily regulated industries, where legislative compliance, health & safety and the deployment of scarce, expensive and highly qualified resource are top priorities. Dynama OneView is a single, integrated organisational design and resource management solution which customers exploit to ensure their people and resources are applied with maximum efficiency in the right place and at the right time. Based on Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) architecture, OneView eliminates the need for hardware saving on infrastructure costs and capital expenditure. For more information, visit

www.dynama.global



Andrew Carwardine
Dynama Managing Director

East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust employs Thoughtonomy Virtual Workers alongside human teams to improve patient experience and boost employee satisfaction

Groundbreaking intelligent automation program highlights huge potential for realizing efficiency benefits rapidly across the NHS

Working with Thoughtonomy, ESNEFT has cut the time taken to process the first stage of each GP referral from 15-20 minutes down to five minutes. The program will eliminate the need for staff to spend more than 100 hours a week processing paperwork and instead ensures referrals are actioned 24/7.

The intelligent automation program, which has been running since July is the first of its kind within the NHS and is initially being deployed in five specialist clinical units – Neurology, Cardiology, Urology, Nephrology and Haematology. Within the first three months, the Trust released more than 500 hours of medical secretaries' time and estimates it will also save £220,000 in associated direct costs by July 2019.

Darren Atkins, Deputy Director of ICT at ESNEFT, said: "We're delighted with the results we've realized so far and are hugely excited about the potential benefits of automating more processes across our Trust. When you look at the time and cost savings we've already banked within just one specific area of our operations, you start to get an idea of how intelligent automation can drive transformation on a huge scale within the NHS."

Using the Thoughtonomy Virtual Workforce® platform, three virtual workers at Ipswich Hospital actively monitor incoming referrals from the national GP Electronic Referral Service (eRS) in real-time, 24 hours a day. As

soon as a referral is received, the virtual worker reads the content and extracts the reason for referral. It retrieves all relevant referral data and supporting clinical information such as scan and blood test results from disparate sources, before merging everything into a single pdf document. The virtual worker then uploads the document into the Trust's administrative systems using highly secure smart card technology and alerts the lead consultant that the referral is ready for review and grading.

Prior to the automation program, medical secretaries were responsible for processing referrals manually, downloading and printing documents, which they then scanned into a new document. In a large Trust such as ESNEFT, which deals with around 2,000 referrals per week, this was a huge drain on medical secretaries' time.

According to the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), automation could save the NHS up to £12.5bn a year, the equivalent of 10% of its annual budget. In addition, it is estimated that a further £6bn could be saved through automation in social care. The recent Darzi Review of Health and Care called on healthcare bodies to 'embrace full automation to release time to care' as part of a 10 Point Plan to future-proof health and care services in the UK.

Terry Walby, CEO & Founder of Thoughtonomy, said: "Intelligent Automation has a massive role to play in streamlining

time-consuming and inefficient processes across the NHS. By absorbing a wide range of time-intensive, repetitive tasks, we can unburden staff from administration and allow them, instead, to focus on delivering the excellent quality of care upon which we all rely. We're delighted to be working with forward-thinking NHS Trusts, such as ESNEFT, who are championing the use of AI and automation technology in order to deliver real benefits to hardworking frontline staff while reducing costs. This, in turn, translates into a better patient experience for all."

Frontline staff at ESNEFT have welcomed the new automated process. Dr Petr Pokorny, a Staff Grade Neurologist, said: "It allows for a more efficient, fluent flow of work, as it's easier to deal with five new referrals every morning rather than a huge pile of 35 referrals once a week. What's more, we now have our medical secretaries fully focused on the things that make a real difference to our staff and patients."

The new automated referral process supports ESNEFT's obligations under the Standard Contract for 2018/19 to process all referrals via the Electronic Referral Service (eRS), and to optimize its operations in line with the Paper Switch Off program, which comes into force on 1st October.

Thoughtonomy enables organizations to enhance the productivity of their workforce through the intelligent automation and digitization of knowledge

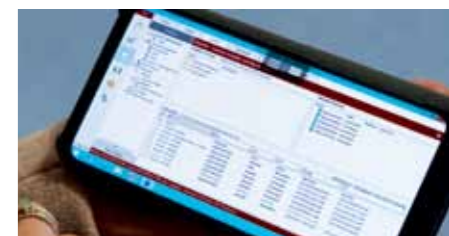
work. It uses AI and robotic process automation software to emulate how people work, allowing companies to add flexible resources to their team without disruption and rapid ROI.

About Thoughtonomy

Thoughtonomy is an intelligent automation technology company that has created an award-winning platform to help companies of all sizes improve the productivity of their workforce. Combining the principles of cloud computing, software robotics and artificial intelligence in a single integrated platform, our customers enjoy frictionless deployment of a digital workforce that delivers fast, measurable results in an infinite number of roles.

Thoughtonomy was founded in the UK in 2013 and now works with more than 200 clients in 29 countries and has offices in London and Manchester in the UK, New York and Austin in the US. Thoughtonomy's SaaS platform combines AI and RPA to supply companies with virtual workers that automate office work.

For further information, please see <http://thoughtonomy.com/>



The health sector must prioritise a smooth transition from legacy IT infrastructure, says Tmaxsoft UK

As the new Health Secretary pushes for digital transformation, risk management must be a priority to avoid disasters

Matt Hancock, the new Health Secretary reaffirmed his passion for technology at NHS Expo earlier this month, as he outset plans to make the NHS an ecosystem for the best technology available. The Health Secretary announced the rollout of a new NHS app for patients, the creation of a HealthTech Advisory Board to highlight where changes need to happen, and an additional £200m investment to turn a group of NHS Trusts into internationally recognised centres for technology and innovation.

The prospect of overhauling the entire NHS IT system is exciting and well overdue, but the risks of digital transformation must also be considered and properly managed, says software innovator TmaxSoft UK.

To make the most out of next generation technologies such as artificial intelligence, the health system must adopt more flexible IT infrastructures that facilitate speed and responsiveness. These transformation projects can prove

risky however, as they require movement away from IT systems that have been long relied on to perform core functions. A small error during the transformation process can therefore result in a drastic disruption of services, as recently highlighted by the TSB IT fiasco.

This should not deter the health sector from embarking on transformation projects however, as organisations can greatly minimise their chances of disruption through risk management and effective planning, according to Carl Davies, CEO of TmaxSoft UK.

Davies continued: "When it comes to moving away from mainframes infrastructures for example, one of the riskiest tasks is altering programmes and applications, or re-writing code. Re-engineering systems can take years, which means that the scope for error is far-reaching. However, institutions have the option to re-host their mainframes, meaning that they can simply lift

existing mainframe assets and shift them to new open platforms. Re-hosting is faster, less risky, and helps systems to operate in the exact same way, but many organisations still choose outdated strategies that put them at harm. This suggests that organisations are not doing everything in their power to mitigate risk around transformation projects.

"The health service will be in a much stronger position once it has been migrated to a modern

system, granting patients access to life changing treatments and making operational efficiencies across the board. Transformation does not have to be a dangerous journey, so long as organisations identify any gaps in their knowledge and work with the right partner to smooth out any vulnerabilities. Failure to do so in the health sector could put patients at substantial risk." Davies concludes.



Growth Hub Business Solutions launches new service for local authority recruitment

A new service designed to help local authorities fill their job vacancies has been launched by Business Solutions, the commercial arm of the CWLEP Growth Hub.

CW Employment Solutions will help councils save time and money, both by matching the right candidates with the right vacancies and by managing expectations all round so that new recruits are likely to stay.

Improving retention rates is an important aspect of the service, as the costs of continually re-advertising posts and settling people in only for them to leave shortly afterwards are ones which local authorities want to avoid.

CW Employment Solutions offers a turnkey solution from inception, job specification, search, through to support at interview and settling successful candidates into their new roles following appointment.

For local authorities that need to make every penny count and fill vacancies in a timely manner,

reducing staff turnover and recruitment costs is an attractive prospect. The service offers independent, accurate advice based on market knowledge.

Richard Hales, (Manager) of CW Employment Solutions, said:

"We will work with local authorities every step of the way to ensure that they get the right person for the job, and that new recruits have a clear picture of what their role entails and of the culture of the organisation.

"Employee retention is improved by managing expectations right from the start and gauging at interview whether or not the prospective employee buys into the organisation.

"We can guide local authorities about where to look for staff, across the spectrum of roles, and avoid the pitfall of advertising on

the "wrong" job board for a role.

"Having vacancies lying open for weeks or even months on end, with other staff having to cover the work as best they can, puts pressure on already hard-pressed councils."

The service is a first for Business Solutions. The commercial service goes beyond the scope of the fee-free services provided by CWLEP Growth Hub such as general business advice and help with grant funding.

Among its success stories was the appointment of a key specialist member of staff for a local authority that had previously been searching in vain for a long time. CW Employment Solutions identified better channels for search and successfully brought in a suitable person for the role.



Game of drones: ODS launches commercial drone services in Oxford

Oxford Direct Services (ODS), the service delivery and commercial arm of Oxford City Council, today announced that it is to start providing drone-based services to include roof and building surveying, land mapping, aerial photography and filming.

As far as is known, this is the first time a council owned organisation has brought drone services in-house and shows the innovative approach ODS is adopting to generate revenue since Oxford City Council created the wholly owned company in April 2018. All ODS' profits will be used to fund public services in the community.

ODS is Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) licensed and approved to offer commercial services with qualified and insured pilots. ODS will operate fully in accordance with best practice and GDPR rules and regulations in relation to permission to fly, safety and the privacy of residents.

Initially, ODS will focus on surveying the roofs of 7,800 properties it maintains on behalf of Oxford City Council. The use of drones will save time, drive down costs and reduce the health

and safety challenges typically encountered with this type of work. Commercial surveying, mapping, aerial photography and filming will be competitively priced consistent with each customer's specific requirements.

Ben Strang, ODS' project leader of drone services, explains, "I was a felt roofer for 15 years. If you're working on low to high rise housing blocks to identify, for example, pest entry points or find roof leaks, putting up scaffolding is at best a very hit and miss process. You erect the scaffolding where you think the source of issue lies but guaranteed it's not there and then you waste time and money moving the scaffolding tower. Using a drone resolves this and helps us pinpoint exactly where we need to work so that we can do first time fixes and enhance

efficiency."

In addition, drones are a clean, environmentally friendly, relatively quiet and unobtrusive way of surveying compared to using scaffolding or motorised elevated platforms.

Ben Strang adds, "We'll be very proactive with residents to safeguard their privacy. This means we'll inform people by letter when we'll be operating, the reasons for it and offer them the footage if they so wish. This is all documented in our operations manual which had to be approved by the CAA as part of our licensing process."

ODS has invested in an off-the-shelf DJI Phantom 4 Advanced quadcopter drone which has excellent safety systems and is simple to fly using a remote controller with built-in screen. Offering up to 30 minutes flight time per battery, the DJI Phantom drone comes with dual-band satellite positioning [GPS and GLONASS], five vision sensors for obstacle detection and is equipped with a one inch 20 Mega Pixel camera capable of shooting 4K super HD video and

stills.

All drone operators need the permission of the individual landowner to fly over their land. In the Oxford area, drone services can be delivered quickly as ODS is already authorised by the council to do this.

Simon Howick, Oxford Direct Services' managing director, says, "Hiring a drone firm costs between £300-£1000 to survey a roof, with scaffolding also expensive and cumbersome. It made total sense to invest in the drone equipment, flight training and licensing and add this skillset to our portfolio. It'll pay for itself within a year, we'll save money for our main customer – Oxford City Council – with drones becoming an additional revenue stream given we can now offer local businesses and residents surveying, mapping, photography and filming services."

For enquiries about drone services, contact Oxford Direct Services on **01865 335400** or email **externalmaintenance@oxfordds.co.uk**

IGEL Announces European DISRUPT 2019 End User Computing Forum

...Leading Industry Event on End User Computing, January 23-25, 2019, in Munich, Germany...

IGEL, a world leader in endpoint management software for the secure enterprise, has announced dates for its second annual DISRUPT End User Computing Forum. The leading industry conference on end user computing (EUC) will be held on January 23-25, 2019 in Munich, Germany, at the INFINITY Hotel & Conference Resort. Featuring prominent industry speakers sharing insights and trends on today's EUC transformation, the conference will highlight why today's organisations need to "challenge everything".

"Organisations are facing a series of EUC challenges in an environment of increasing management constraints. Challenges ranging from workforce mobility and hardware refreshes to endpoint security and the migration to Windows 10. But with technology vendors such as Microsoft making huge advancements with Windows Virtualised Desktops in its Azure cloud solutions and Citrix continuing to innovate with its cloud and subscription business there are an increasing range of exciting EUC solutions for enterprises," said Simon Townsend, IGEL Chief Marketing Officer for EMEA. "At DISRUPT we will dig deep into EUC transformation with insights and best practices delivered by some of the industry's most prominent thought leaders as well as practical advice from EUC leaders at top organisations across multiple industries. It's the can't-miss event for anyone in the EUC industry."

Underscoring the DISRUPT 2019 theme, "Challenge Everything," event presenters will

be demonstrating how attendees can overcome the common EUC challenges of complexity and cost. Speakers and sessions lined up for the highly anticipated event will share how organisations can take their EUC environment to new levels of cost efficiency, simplicity and protection.

Insight will be shared on Windows Virtual Desktops, protocol comparisons, graphics and virtual reality in VDI, how to achieve digital transformation, the latest Citrix updates and the IGEL roadmap.

Keynote speakers include:

- Dr Benny Tritsch, Founder of Dr Tritsch IT Consulting and a Co-Founder of Rex Analytics
- Thomas Poppelgaard, EUC Technology Evangelist and Independent Analyst
- Ruben Spruijt, Senior Technologist, Nutanix
- Simon Binder, Microsoft MVP – Enterprise Mobility, Digital Workspace
- Simon Clark, Aimar Foundation UK, Morgan Stanley
- Claudio Gronau, Otto Wulff Bauunternehmung GMBH
- Nathan Hill, Research Vice President, Gartner
- Heiko Gloge, Founder and CEO, IGEL
- Douglas Brown, Global Technology Evangelist, IGEL
- Stephen DiFranco, IoT Industry Expert, Independent Analyst
- Eva Helen, Founder and CEO, EQ Inspiration
- Chantell Comberger, VP Retail, IT Division, CPC
- Craig Hinchliffe, Principal Product Manager, Citrix Workspace at Citrix
- Mike Schumacher, CEO, Lakeside Software

...Showcasing How Endpoint Transformation Means Organisations Must "Challenge Everything"...

- Chris Longstaffe, Founder and CEO, Integratis
- Matthew Friel, Vation Ventures
- Jason Southern, EMEA Head of Segment Sales for Visualisation and Virtualization, NVIDIA
- Heiko Nass, Leading Host, Centracon
- Matthias Haas, Chief Technology Officer, IGEL
- Barry Coombs, Director, Co-Owner, Computerworld Systems
- Doug Keeley, Mark of a Leader
- Jed Ayres, President & CEO, North America, IGEL
- Simon Townsend, CMO, EMEA, IGEL

Attendees of DISRUPT 2019 are also invited to attend a Technical Boot Camp where they can earn their IGEL Certified Engineer (ICE) status as an IGEL cloud architect or IGEL UMS expert.

The intensive, one-day training courses offer detailed and hands on training on the IGEL product portfolio; Universal Management Suite configuration; Citrix and VMware configuration; IGEL Cloud Gateway; and troubleshooting scenarios. IGEL reseller and distribution partners can attend both product technical training and sales training, led by Integratis.

The event is hosted by IGEL and sponsored by Nutanix, NVIDIA, AMD, PrinterLogic, Cherry, ControlUp, DeviceTrust, Parallels, Lakeside, Cendio ThinLink, ADN, Vanquish Deutschland, Arrow and Integratis. Register today for early bird pricing at <https://disrupteuc.com/munich/>



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FIRE SAFETY:

High on the agenda for high rise refurbishments

Safety checks have been carried out on hundreds of high rise buildings* in the last 12 months, with many having to be reclad to meet regulations.

In June 2017, all local authorities and housing associations were told by the Department for Communities and Local Government to carry out safety checks on external cladding to ensure that any potential fire spread does not pose a risk to the health and safety of tenants*.

When recladding existing developments, it is important for councils to ensure that safety measures are met whilst still creating a modern and attractive building exterior to appeal to future tenants.

When choosing a material to replace existing cladding due to safety concerns EQUITONE is

a durable fibre cement facade material. It achieves the perfect balance between aesthetics and safety, meeting the reaction to fire classification A2-s1,d0 whilst offering an extensive palette of subtle and inspiring shades in a variety of textures and finishes. EQUITONE also has a life expectancy of at least 50 years.

Constructing beauty

EQUITONE's versatility allows the architect to put their own creative stamp on the building, making it suitable for both traditional and modern schemes. It can also be cut and fabricated into a wide range of shapes, allowing the architect to use their imagination

to create striking patterns in the exterior design whilst being mindful of the surrounding environment and existing buildings.

EQUITONE in practice

EQUITONE has been specified on high rise buildings throughout the UK, with a recent example being Blackwall Reach. Around 6,400m² of EQUITONE [natura] was specified for the £300m housing development in Poplar, East London.

Almost 1,600 new apartments were created as part of the regeneration project of Blackwall Reach, which replaced the former 1970s Robin Hood Gardens

housing estate.

EQUITONE [natura], which offers a tactile, smooth surface that allows the textures of the fibre cement to show through, helped to create a modern and attractive building exterior.

For more information about EQUITONE, visit <http://www.equitone.co.uk>.

** Information from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Building Safety Programme, which was developed to ensure that residents of high rise buildings are safe now and in the future.*



The State of UK Connectivity in 2019

With the future of the economy looking ever more digitally-driven, the necessity for better broadband access across the UK has become increasingly time-sensitive. This summer we saw an acknowledgement that existing infrastructure plans need to evolve, that ambitions need to be scaled up.



Evan Wienburg

TRUESPEED | TRULY BETTER BROADBAND

The UK Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review has now recognised National Infrastructure Commission calls for greater investment in full fibre broadband to ensure Britain is able to keep pace with digitisation. This type of nationwide digital connectivity is paramount to the nation's success. The Government's recognition that a full-fibre future is essential to the prospects of businesses, individuals and the overall economy serves as an important first step.

The broadband revolution that has taken place over the past 15 years has been credited with opening up countless opportunities for businesses situated in urban areas. These include the introduction of flexible working to enable greater employee productivity and increase the size of the labour market, as well as the opening up

of new regional and international markets, providing myriad new ways for businesses to extend their customer bases. Additional investment in still faster broadband means good news for every one of these businesses.

Yet for those outside the metropol, the recent Government intervention has far greater significance. The truth is that while larger inner-city businesses have reaped the benefits of high speed broadband for years now, businesses in more rural areas have been stifled by a lack of connectivity and found it difficult to compete.

Inadequate infrastructure in rural areas has all too often meant that employees find themselves deprived of the opportunity to work from home or in a more flexible capacity, forcing many to move into overpopulated cities where house prices are skyrocketing. Regional talent

pools have long been diminishing and small businesses regularly struggle to find willing local investors, unable to fully prosper and realise their ambitions due to a poor digital infrastructure that's incapable of meeting their needs.

Furthermore, from online customer support and digital transactions to interactive warehouse/inventory listings, there are many digital features and facilities that consumers today expect as standard from the businesses that court their custom. If a rural business can barely get on the web, how can it hope to deliver this functionality to a satisfactory level?

The reality is that simply being situated outside of any major city is currently a huge disadvantage for smaller companies. Given that businesses operating outside in smaller cities, towns and rural areas contribute over £229 billion to the UK economy, how much greater might this figure be if their digital infrastructure was up to scratch?

The Government has made the right noises this year, but its intentions must now be realised at a local level, with both the public and private sectors on board and equipped to provide a full fibre future for all. As we've learned during the past decade of so-called superfast broadband infrastructure delivery - much of which cannot realistically be classed as future-proof - provision to rural areas has too often been de-prioritised or badly implemented by local authorities.

No wonder that many communities have taken up the issue of poor connectivity into their own hands. Localised broadband schemes such as those seen in the highlands of Scotland show that small communities

refuse to be left behind and are successfully preparing themselves for the future without relying on public funding. Similarly, private sector infrastructure firms such as ourselves or Trooli have demonstrated that, contrary to past claims by larger providers, it is perfectly possible to connect these hard to reach areas whilst also turning a profit.

The progression made within these areas should not be undervalued. In fact, local authorities should learn from these examples as the blueprint for moving to a full-fibre future. Their role must now be to identify where connectivity remains lacking, recognise where the private sector and/or existing projects are already underway, and use their own resources to bridge the gaps. Local authorities have the potential to be true trailblazers, leading Britain into the digital-first age. This requires long-term vision and strategic nous, recognising where its own subsidies can be spent most effectively in order to avoid the network overbuilding that has muddled some regional broadband rollouts to date.

While the future of Britain contains many uncertainties right now, further digitisation is certain and, by building a long-lasting digital infrastructure, we can ensure that generations of business owners are able to stay connected, contributing to the economy of tomorrow. Every business deserves these basic resources so that employees are no longer restricted and have the tools they need to ensure a more productive and prosperous future. Now is the time for local authorities to work alongside central government and make full fibre hopes come to fruition.

McCann commits significant investment in its training organisation to meet industry demand

Nottingham-based civil and electrical engineering firm McCann has committed significant additional investment in its approved training organisation, after an increase in demand for its range of industry-wide courses.

McCann has received requests for further training to be added to its portfolio from a number of Clients due to the popularity of its existing courses. These include electrical courses covering wiring regulations and initial and periodic electrical inspection testing for public lighting. The company is also looking to introduce additional health and safety courses surrounding electrical safety, moving and lifting, legislation and standards and, emergency preparation.

Alongside the introduction of these new courses, McCann has employed Tony Sexton to

support the delivery of training and to ensure the full compliance of the company's training needs. Tony will also support with and deliver the 'Highways England Passport Induction' after McCann received approval from awarding body Lantra in 2018, to deliver the Highways England Common Induction Course.

Tony's previous experience covers both highways and roads as well as roles with the Highway Electrical Association (HEA). He also brings knowledge of audit processes, training delivery and NVQ assessments.

Speaking about his recent

appointment, Tony said, "When I was offered the opportunity to join such a reputable company as McCann, I jumped at the chance."

He continues, "The investment made by the business in its training programmes demonstrates the importance it places on maintaining the highest standards not only internally, but across the industry as a whole."

The new courses will be taught at both McCann's Nottingham Training Centre and Client premises.

McCann's Training Manager, Ersoy Errol, is delighted with the significant increase in the training courses on offer and hopes to maintain the momentum of growth in this area going forward. "It is great to see such high demand from local councils and companies within our industry for the latest, relevant training across all areas of

civil and electrical engineering,"

"We regularly advise Clients with regards to the requirements and expectations of National Highway Sector Scheme 8 (NHSS8). As a result, many come back to us requesting further training and in some cases, recommend our training programmes to other organisations," said Ersoy.

He continued, "Adding Tony's experience to our team is fantastic! He is not only aware of the requirements under NHSS8, but also the standards and working practices expected at McCann in order to deliver training of the highest level within the industry."

To find out more about McCann and the company's portfolio of projects, visit

www.mccann-ltd.co.uk.



Knowsley's Children's Services make further significant improvements

Ofsted recently carried out an inspection (on 30 and 31 October) of Knowsley Council's first point of contact for children who need help and protection.

This latest visit follows Ofsted's full inspection of Children's Services carried out in 2017, when a number of services were graded as 'Good' and the council's 'inadequate' tag was formally removed.

Following the visit, inspectors concluded that "strong committed senior leadership and good corporate support have ensured that progress seen at that inspection has been sustained and built upon."

Colette Dutton, Knowsley Council's Executive Director (Children's Services), said "Inspectors particularly highlighted Knowsley's dedicated, stable and high-quality workforce and acknowledged during the

inspection the unique position in social care of not having used agency staff for over 18 months."

Inspectors also noted the council's investment into business support systems and additional staffing, which they say has helped to maintain the momentum of improvement at the 'front door'.

Good practice was highlighted in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and the council's Child Exploitation Team (Shield), which benefit from co-location of a wide range of partner agencies including representatives from health and the police, helping children in need of help and protection in Knowsley to receive a timely, proportionate and

effective response.

Cllr Margaret Harvey, Cabinet Member for Children's Services added "This provided us with a great opportunity to highlight and showcase some of the fantastic work we are doing here in Knowsley with our children, young people and families. Inspectors described our services as being good quality with improved outcomes being achieved for children that come to the attention of services. This is a fantastic testament to their commitment to deliver high quality services to our children and families – well done for receiving this national recognition!"



Cllr Margaret Harvey



IED publishes response to UK Shared Prosperity Fund call for evidence

The Institute of Economic Development (IED), has published its response to a call for evidence on the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which will replace the current EU Structural Funds following Brexit in March 2019 and is “specifically designed to reduce inequalities between communities” and

Firstly, responses were invited on what would be an appropriate annual budget for the UKSPF. “The IED’s view is that any amount less than the current budget, which had been slashed as a result of accession state entry, would be a backwards step in a country with severe issues of balance between the most and least deprived,” explained IED Executive Director Nigel Wilcock. “We have called for at least a three-year funding settlement to allow for any planning and suggested it would be appropriate to roll in other budget lines into the UKSPF, such as the Local Growth Fund for England, which could simplify the approach. In fact, the formula for redistributing business rates could also be usefully rolled into the overall approach as well as long as this isn’t a way of diluting total funding.”

The second section explored how the UKSPF should be divided up between the UK’s four nations. “By some formula relating to population and disposable income – and allocations within the devolved nations should be an entirely devolved matter,” Nigel said. “In England, funding could also be allocated by a measure based on population and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, if an alternative approach is needed. There is no place for competitive bidding between areas for funding which takes up a huge amount of taxpayer-funded time and

resource. Of course, ill-prepared plans could be sent back for more detail but competitive bidding damages cross-boundary relations and is an inefficient use of taxpayer’s money. We also think that sub-regions (e.g. LEP areas, combined authorities) should be the basis for financial allocations. This isn’t really the way in which things work at the moment because the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has the control and influence, but there is no other mechanism other than LEP areas. This is the area of economic geography for other policies and this link should be strengthened.”

Questions were then posed on whether economic development and convergence should remain the primary objectives of the new UKSPF. “Yes,” Nigel insisted. “And rebalancing the economy should be a measured objective to ensure that we continue to strive to use the scarce taxpayer-funded resources in the UK economy more equally and therefore more effectively. The UK has a significant issue in this regard with pressure on public resources in the South East and under-used capacity elsewhere. We feel that the fewer objectives, the clearer the position becomes for future funding mechanism – it is not clear that the European programme was generally seen as a convergence measure across public authorities in the UK.”

to “help deliver sustainable, inclusive growth”. The questions asked by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Post-Brexit Funding for Nations, Regions and Local Areas covered the overall UKSPF budget, allocations across the country, activities to be supported and management of the fund.

Finally, responses were sought on the management of the UKSPF, and whether the UK government should set the broad guidelines for the priorities to be supported by it. “There is no other body in a position to do so,” Nigel said. “There are then two choices. Either the Shared Prosperity allocation is part of the general budget settlement to devolved administrations or the broad guidelines are set for the UK as a whole. We have no particular preference for either – but ‘broad guidelines’ should give LEPs and devolved administrations significant discretion on how to run their own programmes.”

With the objective being that the UKSPF will be ‘cheap to administer, low in bureaucracy’, the IED outlined the steps that would need to be taken to meet this remit. “This is best delivered by a national framework: simple LEP-based applications, payment in arrears of activity, and an audit covering some simple key measures should be the starting point,” Nigel explained. “The basic issues to cover are (1) a strategy for the funding; (2) a programme of activities that can deliver outcomes against the strategy; (3) applications that demonstrate a clear ability to deliver; (4) payment in arrears of programme activity in order to avoid fund mismanagement; and (5) an audit to measure against key measures. The programmes

and projects should be monitored and evaluated by an independent audit for governance and simple output measurement which will need to be sliced from the overall fund to avoid self-management or for recipients to appoint their own auditors.”

Full details of the UKSPF will be announced after a public consultation later this year. “The IED supports the Northern Metro Mayors in their call to be involved in the consultation on the Shared Prosperity Fund,” Nigel added. “The loss of EU Structural Funds without a satisfactory replacement and the lack of clarity around local authority funding in the future threatens to create a double impact for all the UK’s regions.”



Nigel Wilcock

Decoding Digital Transformation in the Public Sector

By Jamie Stuart, Business Development Manager, Pulsant

What does digital transformation mean? To the office manager, it may mean becoming a paperless office, to the chief executive, a way to solve business

The point is, it can mean many things, but one thing you can be sure of is that it is not just about technology and it needs to start with the organisation at the heart of the transformation. It should be a journey with full buy-in from senior executives and junior staff.

Why should the Public Sector take notice of the hype?

There is a drive within Governments for digital transformation – there has been a Government Digital Strategy 1 since 2012. The current strategy states that: “The work we want to do should be a foundation for the digital government of the future: a government that is readily adaptable, and able to keep pace with technical change and evolution.”

There is an overriding vision to “...transform the relationship between citizens and the state-putting more power into the hands of citizens and being more responsive to their needs.”

2 To enable this vision, as an organisation you must ensure that you have skilled people, the correct tools to improve processes to achieve compliance and value for money, as well as the ability to ensure that personal and sensitive data is treated appropriately and in respect to the correct regulations.

Chances are that your department is, or will be involved, in a digital transformation project within the next few years as the Government vision continues to permeate all departments. This may require significant changes to the way your department operates.

What is digital transformation?

Many people assume that digital transformation is just about moving to a cloud-based infrastructure and adopting a few new technologies. While this may be one aspect of the transformation, it is not the whole story.

Digital transformation can be thought of as encompassing three elements; people, technology and data.

The human factor

Digital transformation is about business enablement; it needs to offer true benefits to you and your customers. Therefore, it is vital to position the transformation in the right way - it may involve a complete culture change within your department. Everyone must be onboard, chief executives to office juniors, and you will need to offer training and development to reskill your employees.

Technology and Infrastructure

This is not just about moving everything to the cloud, although this may form part of your strategy. As a department, you will have legacy infrastructure and a hybrid cloud model may be more suitable than an all-encompassing transformation. The Governments G-Cloud Framework 3 enables you to buy cloud hosting, cloud software and cloud support from an approved list of suppliers. These companies can assist you in determining which, if any, of your services, can be managed in a public cloud. Or, how you can use existing infrastructure to

problems, to the CIO, enabling technology to meet organisational objectives and to deliver increased performance, and to the IT manager, a lot of work!

integrate within a hybrid cloud, while conforming to standards and regulations.

Data

One of your objectives may be to make better use of the data that you hold within your department. You may have been asked to build and/or support Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) so your employees, or the public, can have better access to the data you hold. You may want to employ a SaaS service while remaining compliant with GDPR.

If you are hesitant to abandon existing infrastructures to virtualised platforms, you should consider a colocation strategy to cloud migration. This would offer you the scalability and cost savings of the cloud while still allowing you to take advantage of your legacy infrastructure.

What next? – Know why you are doing it

Switching to cloud-based operations can result in significant efficiency and productivity gains. But you must have a clear strategy to realise these benefits. Questions to ask yourself include:

1. What is our current culture around transformation and what do we need to do to change it?
2. How will our users and employees become part of our digital transformation?
3. What skills do we have within our organisation and what training and recruitment requirements do we have?
4. What do we need from our cloud services partner?

Consumer Safety on the agenda as Cornwall Council creates Primary Authority partnership with Quality in Tourism.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Tourism spent much of 2018 discussing the short-term let accommodation market, and the potential risk to consumer safety that these lets can present. The discussions highlighted that short-term letting accommodation can be listed on sharing platforms or with Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) even though hosts haven't carried out any safety assessments on the property or, in some cases, have not even installed smoke alarms, CO2 monitors or basic safety equipment. These discussions have created concerns among local authorities who are keen to assure the quality of properties and their safety for consumers.

Malcolm Bell, Head of Visit Cornwall said, "This is an issue that has worried us for a long time; it's simply an accident waiting to happen. Since the EU competition law eradicated the ability for properties to be assessed before being marketed,

I have called for a directive to protect the consumer, so that we can be assured that properties have been checked and that they have complied with all necessary regulations."

In response to these discussions, Cornwall Council has taken a proactive lead and formed a Primary Authority Partnership with Quality in Tourism (QIT) aiming to protect consumers. The Safe, Clean and Legal™ scheme currently delivered by QIT, is now assured by Cornwall Council, helping accommodation providers to demonstrate they reach safe operating standards, and giving consumers peace of mind. The Partnership has been ratified by the Secretary of State and the resulting framework is being rolled out all over the country, starting with Cornwall.

Deborah Heather, Director at Quality in Tourism says, "We have provided a solution to a problem that is being faced by councils across the UK. A council's reputation is being risked every day by listing properties that may not be complying with even the most basic safety requirements

and therefore risking consumer welfare."

Malcolm Bell, Head of Visit Cornwall continues "Safe, Clean and Legal gives us the tools we need to protect our consumers and by the end of 2019 I intend for it to be mandatory for the safety of all properties to have been assessed before they are registered and promoted on the Visit Cornwall channels."

Primary Authority allows businesses to receive assured and tailored advice on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact. By entering into a co-ordinated partnership with Cornwall Council, Quality in Tourism is now able to share advice, guidance and best practice with participants, following consultation with Cornwall Council.

Peter Hampson, Chief Executive at British Destinations says "Safe, Clean and Legal™ acts as an 'off the shelf' framework that can be easily adopted by any council to not only protect their consumers but also their destination's brand.

In a market that has become increasingly unregulated, these assessments need to be put in place across the UK in order to prevent consumers from being injured or worse by those who fail to realise that providing tourist accommodation, however briefly, is a fulltime profession and one that comes with serious responsibilities attached."

Having started with Cornwall Council and Visit Cornwall, Quality in Tourism is also looking to work with other local authorities across England, using the approved Safe, Clean and Legal™ inspection plan to help support the growing issues surrounding the shared economy. The inspection plan gives local authorities the reassurance that their properties have been checked and verified and will also ensure that guests staying in these properties are protected, staying in a legitimate establishment that has complied with all of the necessary regulations. For more information and to apply for your local authority, please visit www.qualityintourism.com.



Deborah Heather



Malcolm Bell

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