

# Local Directgov Programme

Connecting Local Services to Directgov

[www.localgov.gov.uk/localdirectgov](http://www.localgov.gov.uk/localdirectgov)

## Welcome to the Local Directgov Programme's December Edition

### Jim Fitzpatrick, Local e-Government Minister for the future of Local Directgov

In a recent Ministerial speech at an external stakeholders away day, Jim Fitzpatrick MP, Minister for Local e-Government, highlighted the next steps for Local e-Government, including the Local Directgov Programme.

Acknowledging that Local e-Government has been a remarkable achievement to date, and drawing attention to the transitions within it, he highlighted ODPM's policy for taking e-government forward to the next stage.

Commenting that due to the successful delivery, it would now be irresponsible to maintain a large infrastructure, he highlighted the need to migrate the National Projects. The three exceptions to this, which will continue to be centrally driven, are to be Government Connect, the Local Directgov Programme, and a newly announced £5 million national take-up campaign to be launched in the New Year.

Mr Fitzpatrick commented: "Like any good programme, Local e-Government has developed a life of its own. Imagination has bred innovation. Local Authorities have found ways to adapt and develop products, that in turn, have helped other Local Authorities. The natural conclusion therefore, is that Local Authorities own them, spread them and reap the benefits."

"Over the last five months we have transferred ownership, so they can begin to be taken forward by individual councils. We will continue to migrate projects, whilst driving forward only the parts of the programme that need a push on a national scale, where joining up across government at all levels is essential."

Mr Fitzpatrick also drew specific attention to two Local Directgov products during his speech for their usefulness to Local Authorities: 'The How To Guide', and 'The Good Practice Guidance for Online transactions for Local Authority Web Managers'.

## 'How To' Guide & Factsheets Now Available

Factsheets to compliment the Local Directgov Programme's 'How To' Guide are now available for download at [www.localgov.gov.uk/localdirectgov](http://www.localgov.gov.uk/localdirectgov)

These fact sheets are a series of short, easy to use, printable guides to support the How To Guide, which will assist Local Authority web managers.

## Local Directgov Going Live!

### The Local Directgov Programme is on target to 'go live' in January 2006, linking all 388 English Local Authorities to Directgov, initially linking 65 services and 112 interactions. Patrick Clark, Programme Manager for Local Directgov tells us more.

Patrick Clark, Local Directgov Programme Manager says "At Local Directgov, we recognise that Local Authorities have worked hard to e-enable their services and to achieve their Priorities Outcomes. We want to work with them to maximise on this effort. I believe that in working together to enable citizens to access Local Authority services via Directgov, we can significantly increase the up-take of those services."

"The Local Directgov Programme is successfully moving forward, and rapidly progressing towards a January 'Go Live' date. By the 9th of December we will have completed the collection of virtually all of the Local Authority URLs requested" he added.

This means that January will see all the 388 English Local Authorities' priority services and interactions, as listed in the How To Guide (65 services/112 interactions) linked to the Directgov website [www.directgov.uk](http://www.directgov.uk) via the Local Directgov application.

"Once this system goes live in January, we will also be requesting a fuller set of services and interactions that are currently being finalised by the Local Directgov team. These URLs will be requested from all Local Authorities and linked into Directgov in March 2006. Local Authorities will be able to begin to realise the tangible benefits of this Programme."

## An Interview with an ESO ...

Since October, the Local Directgov Programme has had a team of 15 Engagement Support Officers (ESOs) working both to support the current Local Authority pilots and to approach all other English LA's to encourage their participation in the Programme, making them aware of all the benefits. We hear more from Nigel Rainford, one of the ESOs, to find out more about what they have been doing.

**Nigel, how did you get involved with the Local Directgov Programme & in being an Engagement Support Officer for it?**

I was working as the e-Gov Coordinator at Oldham MBC, saw the advert and thought it was an interesting opportunity and a logical progression. I am now based in Bolton, working with this pilot, and cover the Local Authorities in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.

**What are you aiming to achieve through this role?**

As ESOs, we are encouraging Local Authorities to fully engage with the Programme, to take ownership of their content, and to improve the citizen's journey when interacting with government services on the web.

We are asking Local Authorities to provide Directgov with URLs to 65 service areas (112 interactions), and to put them into the ESD toolkit, in order to create the links between Directgov and their website.

My role is to work with these Local Authorities, and to demonstrate the easiest possible way in which they can do this, according to their IT set up, and to give them support where needed

**So, what does a typical day consist of in your job?**

Contacting LAs to arrange meetings, visiting LAs for presentations on the Local Directgov Programme, speaking to colleagues to get updates and tracking progress.

**What do you see as the key benefits of Local Directgov for Local Authorities?**

Primarily, that it will increase the number of visitors to their website, but also the efficiency gains of encouraging more people to transact through a website.

I expect that a further important benefit will be the increased citizen satisfaction with the Local Authority service quality they receive.

**How much practical help is available to Local Authorities wishing to engage?**

The ESOs are available to visit LAs that may require advice and help with inputting data into the toolkit or working with the CSV files. Additionally, we are providing information about the upcoming XML Schema.

There is also the How To Guide and other tools on the website, which provide further helpful guidance to web managers and IT staff.

**What kind of response have you had so far?**

I have had a very positive response from the Local Authorities I have spoken with so far, and work has already begun with some of them.

Some LAs have been auditing BVPI 157 and have the URLs ready and waiting. They just needed to know exactly where they should be input, and the best method of inputting this data.

**Any final comments or advice for Local Authorities who are considering the Programme?**

Just view the whole process of online transactions from the citizen perspective, and consider how it will ultimately be of real benefit to them. An improved service to the citizen is the real purpose behind this work.

## Directgov wins Website of the Year!

Directgov was recently named central Government website of the year at the 2005 Good Communication Awards, which recognises excellence in public sector communications, and contributions to joining up, which serving to further endorse the benefits of the Local Directgov Programme.

With an ever-growing strong reputation, matched by a growing take-up from citizens, the gains for Local Authorities when linking their sites through the Local Directgov Programme, have never been more convincing.

## Thanks to the Local Authority Assurance Group

### The Local Directgov Programme's first Local Authority Assurance Group (LAAG) meeting for the programme's current pilot Local Authorities, took place on 18th November, proving a successful forum, so a BIG thank you to all who attended.

The Local Directgov Programme's first Local Authority Assurance Group (LAAG) meeting for the programme's current pilot Local Authorities and portals, took place on 18th November, proving a successful forum, so a BIG thank you to all who attended.

The day provided a valuable opportunity to bring together pilots from across the country, with all of our Engagement Support Officers working alongside them.

The LAAG covered a lot of groundwork including terms of reference, presentations and discussions on Local Authority engagement methods, updates on discussions with CMS Suppliers, a break out session on the choice of services and interactions in Directgov, plus technical solutions and how pilots can contribute to testing and quality assurance.

Sarah Powell, Business Change Manager for the Local Directgov Programme says "I want to express my thanks to all the Local Authority pilots for your time and efforts so far on the programme. We really appreciate the hard work that you have been putting in, helping to make the Local Directgov Programme as effective as it can possibly be, in supporting Local Authorities through the process of linking to Directgov."

A total of 21 Local Authorities and 4 pilots have been working with the process. The full list of Local Authority and portal pilots are as follows:

- London Borough of Brent
- Bridgnorth District Council
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Colchester District Council
- Durham City Council
- Essex Online
- Havant District Council
- Kings Lynn and West Norfolk District Council
- London Borough of Kingston
- Lichfield District Council
- Lincup (Lincolnshire's Electronic Gateway)
- Mansfield District Council
- Mid Sussex District Council
- Salford Metropolitan Borough Council
- Surrey Portal ([surreyonline.info](http://surreyonline.info))
- Teinbridge District Council
- Torbay Council
- Wansbeck District Council
- Warwick District Council
- Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
- YourLondon portal

The Local Authority Assurance Group are currently deciding whether to hold a further meeting in January 2006 or whether to continue communications electronically.

## Successfully e-enabling Neighbourhoods & Parish Councils

We interview Anna Smith, from Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, joint lead Authority (alongside Surrey ePartnership) for Project 2: Neighbourhoods & Parish Councils.

Anna says "The project is e-enabling parish councils and neighbourhoods, by building on and further developing the ENCORE product, e-Community Publish, enhancing the functionality for parish councils and neighbourhood groups."

The initiative aims to provide Local Authorities with a simple toolkit to help support and e-enable local groups. The project deliverables will increase the visibility of local information and services online for the benefit of citizens. It will also help to support collaborative partnerships between Local Authorities and the voluntary community sector.

Although the Neighbourhoods and Parish Councils Project is designed for the benefit of all established community groups, it is expected to be of particular interest to 'hard to reach' communities, opening up new opportunities through online interactions for those who may be at risk of being socially excluded.

The Neighbourhood and Parish Councils Project effectively supports both Local Authorities and the empowerment of their citizens. Local authorities can bring vital support to their community organisations by providing this service, whilst also re-engaging their citizens with the institutions of government, and enhancing the local authority's role in community leadership.

The Neighbourhoods & Parish Councils project has already been successfully working with a small number of neighbourhood groups and parish councils in the Royal Borough of Kingston and in Surrey. The project is now encouraging other Local Authorities to use eCommunity Publish to develop neighbourhood or community websites, in order to meet their Priority Services Transformation Outcome commitments (G2).

Anna Smith adds "The project is really progressing well, with strong partnership links developing between the Royal Borough of Kingston (RBK) and Surrey ePartnership, providing us with a good cross section of user requirements. Both RBK and Surrey ePartnership are engaging with local community organisations during the project, ensuring that the deliverables are relevant and appropriate."

"The project is now working to produce and deliver useful and flexible tools, ensuring that they can be used by as many local authorities and community organisations as possible, maximising the benefit to local authorities and their citizens, nationally."

"The development of this product is now well underway, with full roll out and marketing across Kingston and Surrey, currently taking place. Lessons learnt from these pilots will be captured in an implementation plan and the final product will be available to other Local Authorities early in the New Year."

## Assisting Local Authority Web Managers

### Brian Gordon, Web Manager for the London Borough of Brent, tells us more about what Local Directgov can do for Local Authority web managers

Brian has been involved in Local Authority web management and IT development for many years now. Here, he speaks from a Local Authority perspective about the Local e-Gov Programme and tells us more about how Local Authorities can improve their citizen service even further for the future.

**How did Brent get involved in the Local Directgov Programme?**

Given the experience London Connects obtained during the development of the London Portal - YourLondon, the ODPM invited London Connects to lead on this development. Brent had already been part of the executive group for YourLondon and made a significant contribution, and in addition was leading work on the development of the Local Government Navigation List (as part of the West London Alliance). It was therefore felt that Brent had the experience necessary to undertake this far greater challenge of linking all 388 English Local Authorities to Directgov.

**What do you think have been the most significant changes that have taken place in local e-Government Programme so**

**far, for Local Authority IT / web managers?**

Creating availability online of all government services has been absolutely key in the transformation and modernisation of public services. The last few years has witnessed a huge cultural shift in attitudes. Services units and groups within Local Authorities now recognize the importance and value of using the web to provide services. With the help of ODPM funding for e-Gov programmes, IT teams are now able to deliver real tangible benefits for the citizen, including increased efficiency and cost savings.

Local Authorities across England have been working hard to ensure that they achieve their priority services outcomes by December 2005, and now this is really paying off. I also think that the increase in the use of both intranets and extranets has been hugely significant in helping to improve internal efficiency, and joining up services.

**Tell us a bit more about how Local Authority can ensure that they provide a convenient, effective, joined up citizen service online?**

The Local Directgov Programme offers a really easy means for Local Authorities to significantly enhance their online services. Directgov has been, and will continue to be, a key means for e-enabling government. [www.directgov.uk](http://www.directgov.uk) is an easy place to turn for a wide and up-to-date range of public information, providing an easy access point for all public services. It offers a

place to interact with central and local government and reduces the frustration of dealing with multiple government sources.

Until now, Directgov has focused on services provided nationally by Central Government departments or their agencies, yet almost 80% of all government services are provided through Local Authorities, Parishes and the voluntary sector. Now the Local Directgov Programme is creating the means for an important extension of this service, deeplinking the site with all English Local Authorities websites to drive users straight to their online services.

**What do you think are the biggest benefits of the Programme for a Local Authority web manager?**

The key development, in my view, has been the ability to join up authorities, helping them to share information and to provide a better quality of service to the user. Not only will this enhance the user experience and improve communication with authorities, it will also help to drive traffic through to Local Authority sites, ensuring the e-enabling of their services is really maximised.

My hope is that, when fully developed, it will provide a 'one stop shop' approach to online government, which will appear seamless and less complicated to the user. This in turn will increase take-up of those services, making government easier for Local Authority personnel, their citizens, and their intermediaries alike.