

Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of the CitizenFirst Newsletter which sees the focus of Cambridgeshire County in the UK.

The CitizenFirst Project has recently undergone a major evaluation of some of the key ICT Projects ongoing in the regions and gives some very useful lessons and recommendations for citizen-centric services in other regions, some of which are highlighted by the Mid-West Regional Authority (see article).

Note for your diary

The CitizenFirst International Conference will take place on the 13th & 14th September 2007 in Ieper, Belgium. The theme of this conference is to address issues relating to social inclusion through ICT while also show-casing some of the regional pilot projects of the partner regions. More details on the conference will follow in the next newsletter however your support would be greatly appreciated.



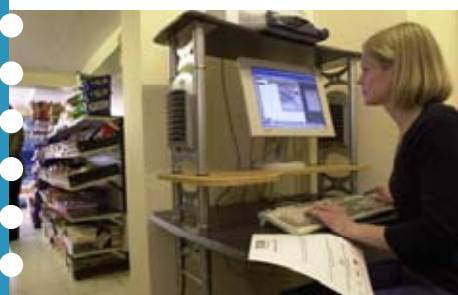
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Focus

Developing access in rural communities:

To an outsider the image of Cambridgeshire is dominated by the city of Cambridge: all very well-heeled and rather privileged.



The reality is that the County is mainly rural with small scattered communities and where the traditional industries were mainly agricultural and where there are deprived communities, which are often rurally isolated. Giving people access to services by enhancing new technology was one of the principle drivers behind creating a network of over 90 Community Access Points (CAPs) over half of which are located in small rural communities where access to public transport, public services and local employment opportunities are limited.

What are CAPs?

CAPs are based in a variety of locations: Pubs, Post Offices, Village and Community Halls; Church buildings. They are all linked to Cambridgeshire Community Network a broadband PFI project that has connected over 400 sites across the County. CAPs have one or two PCs, printers and scanners and are supported by staff from Library Learning Services and a network of trained volunteers.

CAPs were established in partnership with District Councils, Parish Councils and local groups

and stakeholders. Since their establishment CAPs have gone through several phases of development: from initial set-up to the creation of an ethos of local ownership and responsibility. Work with partners and funders has been key to encourage different service providers to investigate what CAPs have to offer and to enhance and support the model of sustainable delivery and development.

Partnership work has enabled the development of CAPs and has empowered work on tackling rural exclusion. By having community users on the Steering Groups there has been a direct link between service users and service providers. This has helped inform the debate on e-services and has also highlighted the link between skills, e-content and access.

Skills, e-content and access are the three pivotal points around which the network of CAPs has developed:

Skills: giving users the skills, knowledge and confidence to access information and use IT

E-Content: developing channels for users and promoting what's available online.

Access: putting IT in the heart of communities where many have no access to it.



Focus Cambridgeshire

Using technology to capture local history

Steve Capes, Project Manager for the Cambridgeshire Community Archive Heritage Lottery Fund project explains how technology has transformed local archives.

Can you tell us about the project?

The Heritage Lottery Fund has funded Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network (CCAN) for two years to establish a network of Community Archives. Using the latest in digital and web technology, the project will establish at least 40 local archive groups who will create an accessible, community focused web site. Each of the communities involved will have a web presence to share their historical archive. These collections will include images, documents, oral reminiscences in the form of short sound clips and video clips. In order to encourage sustainability beyond project funding all groups are self governing and are tasked with finding ways of income generation that will enable them to meet the small ongoing cost of web hosting and support. >

Some groups have also made bids for funding from other bodies, purchasing laptops and projectors. Others have used their entrepreneurial skills to good advantage by selling calendars and notelets depicting historical scenes on Ebay.

How where the locations chosen?

The project aims to add value to the existing network of Community Access Points that are connected to a countywide broadband network. This network gives secure and reliable access to the internet and is delivered free into rural and other communities.

Each location had to identify volunteers who were willing to form a constituted group that would work with the County's project team. The groups were given the task of networking and promoting the project and to collect material for the site. Training was given to volunteers in the use of the site, scanning and digital recording and photography.

What has technology enabled you to do?

The website (www.ccan.co.uk) was developed specifically to enable the uploading of images, sound and video clips to be stored in a cross searchable online collection. The website design allows the collection to be searched countywide or by location. Hotspots are a feature which allow details to be added to images and for images to be linked together – for instance – an individual can be traced through different photographs.

And long term – what does the future look like?

The project will have created 40 groups by mid 2008. Requests are already being received from communities wishing to join the project and we hope to have about 50 sites by Autumn 2008. The unique nature of the project had generated interest from other parts of the County and we are hoping that the website will become a model for other areas.

Further information can be obtained from:

Steve Capes, CCAN Project Manager, steve.capes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
The website can be found at www.ccan.co.uk



Online Discoveries

At the age of 72, and having never used a computer before, Cyril Heaps a retired farm worker from Pymoor, Cambridgeshire, has written his first book commemorating 50 years of the local Church and documenting his life in the Fens.

Cyril began researching his book on the internet using the ntl broadband connection in the Pymoor church.. Entitled "50 Years of the Methodist Church and my Life in the Fens", the book is largely autobiographical and aims to record the history of the region. It proved to be so popular that all the copies from the first print run sold out. >

Broadband access in the church has enabled local residents to become more involved in the online community in Cambridgeshire. Cyril says, "When the access point was first installed at the church people were a little cautious, personally I had never even turned a computer on let alone thought of using one to write a book! Library Learning Services tutors were on hand to give each user one-to-one tuition and have been extremely patient in helping me to gain the confidence to really make the most of this facility." Cyril has enjoyed gaining new skills from the CAP and is keen for others to understand the benefits of the ntl broadband connection.

He added: "The access point is a wonderful thing and has been of great value to me. Being able to access such a vast array of information and resources is invaluable, and the speed of the ntl broadband connection and ease of use mean I really can't praise it enough." ○



EngAGE: opportunities for the over 50s

EngAGE is funded by UK Online and is one of only 20 Social Impact Demonstrator projects running nationwide until March 2008. The project's focus is to upskill older people enabling them to access information and services online and also to encourage them to become peer mentors to support others. This project will encourage, support, promote and create the social capital to develop **active ageing** across Cambridgeshire by delivering activities around three key areas:

Enabling older people to play a full and active role in society – the project is recruiting older people as volunteers and peer/ICT mentors. Older people will be linked into existing community based projects by encouraging the utilization of existing skills and the development of new ones.

Widening access for older people to online services – by delivering learning and skills to engage with older people and progress them within lifelong learning, introducing them to e-government services, health information and other e-services and by supporting them in the use of the internet and email to keep in contact with relatives and other contacts. The project is also providing transport to online service outlets for those without their own transport. The project will also create a web presence for older people aimed at recording project activity and experiences but with the ultimate

aim of becoming a resource for older people moderated and run by them giving advice and links to services.

Increasing older people's active involvement in inter-generational work - by developing older people's involvement in reading groups, local and family history and in study support and homework clubs for younger people. By developing older people as volunteers and ICT mentors we can encourage and support cross generational work at UK Online centres.

The EngAGE project will be delivered via the network of 80 UK online centres supported by Cambridgeshire County Council. By working with key partners including Age Concern, Cambridge Housing Society, Adult Social Care and the Carer's Project Team, the project is linking to some of the most isolated older people in the community, and encouraging them to forge their own social links through ICT.

As well as First Time Online and other UK online centre products, volunteers will progress on to ICT qualifications like CLAIT and ECDL, and even onto volunteer qualifications. People need to be able to pick their own pathways, but they need the knowledge, confidence and skills to do so. That's where the EngAGE project comes in.

City of Ieper

Results of the local CitizenFirst activities

The City of Ieper placed public computers at 5 different locations in Ieper. In the coming months 2 more Internet kiosks will be placed in 2 extra locations. At the internet kiosks - consisting of 2 PC configurations - there is room for two users. Each user has his own workspace, but since users are sitting next to each other, they can assist each other in using the computer or the Internet. Every internet kiosk is also equipped with a printer. The target group for these PC kiosks are citizens who do not have a computer or internet connection at home. By providing public computers, the city of Ieper gives her inhabitants the opportunity to become computer literate.

Some of these public computers are placed in neighbouring villages of the City of Ieper. In these villages there is no longer a local division of government services, like a public library. As a result of the placement of the Internet kiosks and the ICT activities that are organized at these kiosks, there is a revival of the village life within the rural community.

In earlier newsletters we wrote about the training courses and other ICT activities that were organized for disabled people. These activities pointed out that there is a large need for information about ICT aids amongst disabled people. Because of this, the idea grew with WVA, the local non-profit organization for disabled people, to start an ICT centre of expertise for people with a disability in the margin of the CitizenFirst project.



Kortrijk

The library of Kortrijk will become, even more than is already the case, an active player in bridging the digital divide.

Visitors are getting individual help, with the emphasis on acquiring good searching skills.

The library is the leading force behind the integral approach of the digital city by means of an alliance between the library, the ICT department and OCMW (social welfare organization).

In the library free internet is provided together with specialized data-banks and a specialized learning environment.

The heritage collections are also being completely digitized and the book and music collections are presented by new technologies.

The library will become the meeting place to get to know and test new technologies in a non-commercial and objective environment.

The service concerning transactions is being further digitized wherever necessary and desirable.

Lessons from the Citizen-First pilot evaluation in the Mid-West of Ireland

The pilots fall into two categories. The distinguishing feature is control. Where a project facilitates access to information, control stays with the public authority and only choice is passed to the citizen. Where a project has more complex aims, control is intended to pass to citizens. This distinction is likely to be encountered in other projects. It forms the basis of the Mid-West's recommendation for a common approach to all projects – a 'route map' with an early decision on whether, and in what areas, control is to be retained or relinquished.

Where control is to be retained, an assessment of the strategic context in which information is to be conveyed and choice facilitated is essential.

This entails putting the user-citizen systematically at the centre of concentration. The systematic approach will deliver citizen confidence, staff confidence and project efficiency. It leads to a detailed,



operational plan. Such plans should comprise, as a minimum, the agreed arrangements for communications, marketing, training, data extraction, data use, maintenance, servicing, and project review. Ethical implications should also be considered.

Where control is to be released, the dynamics of the community which will take control must be respected and, if necessary, supported and assisted to increase its capacity. Partnerships should be constructed accordingly, with a clear separation of responsibilities based on the different competencies present.

A strong sense of community and of communal direction is essential. Each will be reflected in coherent operational and training plans.



Trial with WiMAX in the rural part of the Eindhoven Region

Last month a pilot with mobile broadband internet, digital homecare and camerasurveillance through WiMAX, has started in Eersel, a village in the rural part of the Eindhoven Region. This WiMAX system offers the latest possibilities in the field of multimedial mobile technology. The goal of this pilot is to get an insight in the 'behaviour' of a mobile WiMAX-network while several applications are using the network.

Within the pilot three projects will be carried out:

- > Mobile broadband internet. A number of young people will get a WiMAX-card for their laptop with which they have a broadband, wireless access to the internet. This way they can access the internet from their homes where a physical broadband network is not available.
- > Homecare in the rural area with wireless video connection. In this project a number of health care services will be provided via the WiMAX-network. For example a diabetics doctor will be available for consultation through videoconferencing.
- > Wireless guarding of agricultural vehicles. This is the test of an application to guard valuable agricultural vehicles on locations where there is no other security and where there is no physical broadband network available.

The trial is a very interesting trial because of the possible solution for the digital connection of the rural area. In the same time the higher goal of the trial is the realization of a "data sphere" over the entire country where users can pick any desired service from the WiMAX-network. At present time the expectation is also that it will be the successor of UMTS because WiMAX is about thirteen times faster than UMTS.

Announcement International CitizenFirst Conference

September 13-14, 2007

In Ieper, Belgium

More information soon

The CitizenFirst project is a project funded by the INTERREG IIIB North West Europe Programme.

More information on the CitizenFirst project: www.citizen-first.net

More information on the INTERREG IIIB NWE-ENO Programme: www.nweurope.org

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