

**Argyll and Bute Council**  
**Comhairle Earra Ghaidheal agus Bhoid**

Customer Services  
Executive Director: Douglas Hendry



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12 November 2012

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

A meeting of the **SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP - MEDIA PLATFORMS** will be held in the **COMMITTEE ROOM 1, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD** on **MONDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2012** at **2:00 PM**, which you are requested to attend.

Douglas Hendry  
Executive Director – Customer Services

**BUSINESS**

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)**
3. **MINUTES**  
Short Life Working Group – Media Platforms held on 22 October 2012 (Pages 1 - 4)
4. **SCOPE FOR URTV, WEBCASTING AND VIDEO CONFERENCING**  
Report by Executive Support Officer (Pages 5 - 6)
5. **LOOKING LOCAL SERVICE COVERAGE**  
Report by Executive Support Officer and IOD Project Officer (Pages 7 - 10)
6. **LOOKING LOCAL AND EXISTING WEB PORTALS**  
Report by IOD Project Officer (Pages 11 - 14)
7. **USE OF GAELIC ON THE COUNCIL WEBSITE**  
Report by Website Manager (Pages 15 - 18)
8. **WEBCASTING - A SURVEY OF PUBLIC SECTOR ACTIVITY**  
Report by IOD Project Manager (Pages 19 - 44)
9. **MULTIMEDIA OPPORTUNITIES**  
Report by Communications Officer (Pages 45 - 48)

## **SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Gordon Blair  
Councillor Louise Glen-Lee  
Councillor Len Scoullar

Councillor Michael Breslin  
Councillor Aileen Morton  
Councillor John Semple

Contact: Hazel MacInnes Tel: 01546 604269

**MINUTES of MEETING of SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP - MEDIA PLATFORMS held in the  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD  
on MONDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2012**

**Present:** Councillor Louise Glen Lee (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blair  
Councillor Aileen Morton

Councillor Michael Breslin  
Councillor John Semple

**Attending:** Douglas Hendry, Executive Director – Customer Services  
Laura Cameron, Directorate Support Officer  
Lorne MacBrayne, Website Manager  
Robert Miller, IOD Project Officer  
Aileen McNicol, Communications Officer

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MEDIA PLATFORMS - WEBCASTING, LOOKING LOCAL AND URTV**

**(a) REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMER SERVICES  
(CONSIDERED BY THE COUNCIL ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2012)**

The Short Life Working Group resumed discussion on the report that had been considered at the Council meeting on 20 September 2012. The report provided information with regard to the provision of webcasting equipment, Looking Local, URTV and Video Conferencing following research undertaken by Officers. Members received a verbal update on Looking Local and a short demonstration on the service, which would go live on 12 November 2012.

**Decision**

1. Noted the up to date position with regard to Looking Local.
2. Requested that the following information be provided to the next meeting of the Short Life Working Group in respect of Looking Local –
  - a. The cost implications for members of the public accessing Looking Local
  - b. Possibilities for increasing the use of Gaelic on the Councils website, and any associated financial implications
  - c. The synergies between Looking Local and the existing Members Portal

3. Requested that a scoping paper be provided to the next meeting of the Short Life Working Group in respect of URTV, webcasting and video conferencing which will include details of what the Council's aspirations and requirements are in terms of multimedia, prior to a further paper on the feasibility of adopting particular solutions being brought to a future meeting.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director – Customer Services dated February 2012, submitted)

(b) **UPDATE ON LOOKING LOCAL BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMER SERVICES**

A report providing an update on the actions that have been taken with regard to Looking Local was considered.

**Decision**

Noted the report and that a verbal update on Looking Local had already been provided under item 3a of the agenda.

(Report by Executive Director – Customer Services dated 10 October 2012, submitted)

The Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 8 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

(c) **PROPOSALS FROM BRIAN KEATING, URTV: COUNCIL NEWS TV, SCHOOL NEWS TV AND ARGYLL TV**

The Short Life Working Group considered proposals by URTV Ltd to film and broadcast Argyll and Bute Council meetings, establish TV clubs and school news channels for Argyll and Bute Council's seven academies and the provision of community broadband TV.

**Decision**

Agreed -

1. To respond to URTV informing them that the Council was currently revisiting its direction with regard to multimedia communications and would be in contact in due course.
2. To investigate the direction taken by other Councils with regard to multimedia communications, to include the issues they had encountered and successes achieved which would inform preparation of the Council's scope for the introduction of these services.

(Reference: Proposals by URTV, submitted)

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS**

It was noted that alternative service providers could not be considered until the Council had made a decision on its way forward with regard to multimedia communications.

#### **5. BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION AT NEXT MEETING**

The Short Life Working Group were invited to request items for discussion at the next meeting of the Group.

#### **Decision**

1. Noted that the information requested at items 3a, 3b and 3c would be items for discussion at the next meeting of the Group.
2. Agreed to request from the Communications Team a view on how they think multimedia can be used within the Council.
3. Agreed to invite the members of the Communications Team to attend the next meeting of the Short Life Working Group.

#### **6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Short Life Working Group on 19 November 2012 at 2pm.

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**ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL****Short Life Working Group  
Media Platforms****Customer and Support Services****19<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

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**Scoping Paper – URTV, Webcasting, and Video Conferencing**

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**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 At the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 the Group requested that a scoping paper be provided in respect of URTV, webcasting and video conferencing (VC), which provides details of the Council's aspirations and requirements in terms of multimedia.
- 1.2 This paper sets out the key principles that have been agreed to date in regard to each of the media platforms, and any action taken.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the SLWG Members:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report and the proposed course of action with regard to URTV, webcasting and video conferencing.

**3. DETAIL**

- 3.1 The SLWG at their meeting on 22 October 2012 resumed considered on the report that had been considered at the Council meeting on 20 September 2012, and which provided information with regard to the provision of webcasting equipment, URTV and VC.
- 3.2 As agreed at the SLWG a meeting was arranged with Councillor Breslin, in view of his previous experience, to set out possible aspirations for the Council, at this time, in terms of each of the media platforms, taking account of the discussions held at the SLWG. Details are summarised below;
- a) The 3 media platforms should be considered in tandem as they are interconnected
  - b) VC - The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) was noted as an organisation which currently adopts the use of VC and recording equipment that is capable of meeting many of the Council's aspirations. On this basis, Gerry Wilson, IT Infrastructure Services Manager, has been asked to contact UHI with a view to establishing detailed information about using this type of equipment and possible benefits for the Council in utilising a new local partner, such as UHI. For example, advantages in learning from an organisation that has tried and tested a range of communications technology, and increasing the range of facilities available to the Council for VC/broadcasting purposes. An update on the outcome of the discussions with UHI will be provided to the SLWG once available.

- c) Capital investment is required to ensure that the main VC sites currently in operation by the Council are suitably equipped, particularly those that are utilised for Council meetings.
- d) Council Constitution – at present the Constitution does not include provision for the use of VC for Council meetings and should be reviewed to allow this.
- e) Webcasting – as per discussions at the SLWG there is a willingness to explore the implementation of a webcasting solution. At this stage, no further action should be taken, in terms of pursuing solutions such as those offered by Public-I, until the outcome of discussions with UHI have been completed to establish the capabilities of the equipment used by this organisation and whether it would meet the Councils requirements and provide tangible benefits.
- f) URTV – as e) above. If a technical solution can be established which meets the needs of the Council, in terms of broadcasting meetings etc..., and can be delivered in a more economical manner, there would not be merit in pursuing the solutions offered by URTV.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Following initial discussions at the SLWG on 22 October 2012, this paper sets out the Council's current expectations in terms of URTV, webcasting and VC, and provides a summary of the key principles that have been established to date.

#### 5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1	Policy	None at present
5.2	Financial	None at present
5.3	Personnel	None at present
5.4	Equalities Impact Assessment	None at present
5.5	Legal	None at present
5.6	Risk	None at present
5.7	Customer Service	None at present

1 November 2012

**Douglas Hendry**  
**Executive Director of Customer Services**

For further information please contact;

Laura Cameron  
Executive Support Officer  
Customer Services  
Tel: 01546 604325



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## Looking Local Service Coverage

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### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> October the Group asked for clarification of the access to the Looking Local service for customers and in particular the access available via TV.
- 1.2 This paper provides a detailed explanation of the Looking Local coverage in the Argyll and Bute area and beyond.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Short Life Working Group Members:

1. Note the information provided below in response to the action from the meeting held on 22nd October.

### 3. DETAIL.

- 3.1 The Looking Local platform distributes web based information via the following non PC based mediums:
  - Interactive Digital TV provided by Sky, Virgin Media and shortly YouView freeview services
  - Via smartphone and web enabled mobile phone devices
  - Via the Wii games console through a TV screen (needs broadband or dial up connection)
- 3.2 For access via the TV in the Argyll and Bute area this effectively means:
  - Customers who subscribe to Sky TV or Sky Freesat
  - customers who purchase a set top box for the new no subscription YouView freeview service
  - Customers who access via their broadband/dial up enabled Wii games console.

Access is not possible via terrestrial freeview set top boxes or the non Sky version of satellite freeview (freesat) boxes and nor will it be going to be in the future as it is expected that YouView will supplant these services going forward.
- 3.3 In terms of coverage Ofcom report that 54% of rural households in Scotland subscribe to satellite television (Sky), whilst UK nationally only 37% of households have some form of Freeview. The number of households accessing information services via their

Wii is unknown, but likely to be very low; although 56% of households do have games consoles.

- 3.4 Until the new YouView service becomes well established, Sky customers will be the initial beneficiary for the TV element of the Looking Local service and based on the Ofcom figure above, this is around 50% of households in Argyll and Bute. Of course our local content will also be available to viewers across the country, including all those who also subscribe to Virgin Media, bringing the total across the UK capable of viewing local content to 14.5 million.
- 3.5 YouView is the next generation of broadband enabled freeview service supported by the main broadcasters and providing interactive, pay as you go and on demand services. There is no subscription charge, only the cost of the set top box (£249); which is more expensive than old freeview boxes as it has the capacity to record and store data rather than just receive and unscramble it. It is important to note that there is no additional cost for Looking Local over and above what customers already pay for their TV services.
- 3.6 Users of smart phones and web enabled mobile phones are a rapidly increasing community. Ofcom report that in the last year smart phone penetration in Scotland rose from 21% to 32% of the adult population and that thirty-one per cent of people in Scotland said that they used a mobile phone to access the web in 2012, up from 21% a year previously. Looking Local provides web information in a way that is specifically designed for this platform.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Looking Local was procured as part of the council's customer access strategy. Ofcom report that only 31% of rural households regularly access local government websites; although 68% of households have access to the internet. By providing access to council information more readily through digital TV and web enabled smart and mobile phones the council is making easier for over half of TV viewers and all of our web enabled mobile device using customers to access information on council services.
- 4.2 Although access to Looking Local via 'free' TV mediums will initially be limited to Sky Freesat users, the recent launch of the next generation YouView freeview service will see a steady increase in this customer base. It is also worth noting that a disproportionately greater percentage of customers from socially disadvantaged demographics subscribe to Sky.
- 4.2 Ultimately it will be the effectiveness of the publicity and awareness around Looking Local that will be the main determinant of its usage and the service comes with a reporting package that allows us to track usage by access medium and determine if the service is realising sufficient benefits to warrant further investment after the first year.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

- |     |           |  |
|-----|-----------|--|
| 5.1 | Policy    | None, but is part of the council's Customer Management strategy. |
| 5.2 | Financial | None.  |
| 5.3 | Personnel | None.  |

- |     |                              |   |
|-----|------------------------------|---|
| 5.4 | Equalities Impact Assessment | It will help us communicate more effectively with hard to reach customers and those who do not use web services.                                      |
| 5.5 | Legal                        | None.   |
| 5.6 | Risk                         | The main risk is if the take up of YouView is not as forecast, however this has been mitigated by only procuring an initial 1 year contract.          |
| 5.7 | Customer Service             | Looking Local is part of the post Digital Switchover communication and customer service strategy for keeping the council in touch with its customers. |

**Background Documents:**

Ofcom Communications Market Report – Scotland 2012

For further information contact Bob Miller, ext.4026

Bob Miller  
Customer Management Project Manager  
October 2012

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## Looking Local and Existing Web Portals

### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> October the Group requested a paper explaining the synergies between the interactive functionality on the new Looking Local Digital TV platform and the existing council web portals.
- 1.2 This paper provides the explanation requested.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Short Life Working Group Members:

1. Note the information provided below in response to the action from the meeting of 22nd October 2012
2. Intimate if any additional information is required.

### 3. DETAIL.

- 3.1 The Looking Local interactive information service has two menu items for Request It and Report It, to allow customers to raise service requests for a range of council services. These requests are sent as emails to the council mailboxes specified below:

Request Types	Email address for form
Abandoned Vehicle	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Dog Fouling	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Fly Tipping	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
General Report It Form	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Missed Bins	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Potholes	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Street Lighting	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Complaint	<a href="mailto:complaints@argyll-bute.gov.uk">complaints@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Blue Badge Application Form Request	<a href="mailto:bluebadges@argyll-bute.gov.uk">bluebadges@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Council Tax Direct Debit Set Up	<a href="mailto:ctax1@argyll-bute.gov.uk">ctax1@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
General Enquiry	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Bin Request (one form for both normal domestic and recycling domestic)	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Winter Maintenance Request	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Adult Learning	<a href="mailto:aileen.mclaughlin@argyll-bute.gov.uk">aileen.mclaughlin@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Library Item Renewal	<a href="mailto:libraryhq@argyll-bute.gov.uk">libraryhq@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>
Social Care (including Welfare Rights and Telecare)	<a href="mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk">enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk</a>

The Customer Service Centre deals with the ones received to [enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

- 3.2 This service is intended to complement the two other council web portals that allow customers and elected Members to raise service requests through the Lagan (Connect to Tell) web portal and Lagan Members Portal respectively. An important difference between these portals and Looking Local is that requests raised through them feed directly into the Lagan CRM system for action by the relevant Service (mostly Development and Infrastructure). However requests raised through Looking Local have to be manually attached to cases raised in Lagan by CSC advisers. This is the same approach used for texted service requests.
- 3.3 There is overlap in the type of requests that can be raised:

<b>Request Types</b>	<b>Lagan Web Portal</b>	<b>Lagan Members' Portal</b>	<b>Looking Local</b>
Abandoned Vehicle	YES		YES
Dog Fouling	YES		YES
Fly Tipping	YES	YES	YES
General Report It Form	Separate Online Form	YES	YES
Missed Bins	YES	YES	YES
Potholes	YES		YES
Roads, Street Lighting	Separate Online Form	YES	YES
Complaint	YES	YES	YES
Blue Badge Application Form Request	Separate Online Form		YES
Council Tax Direct Debit Set Up	YES		YES
General Enquiry	Separate Online Form	YES	YES
Bin Request	YES	YES	YES
Winter Maintenance Request	YES		YES
Adult Learning	Separate Online Form		YES
Library Item Renewal	Separate Online Form		YES
Social Care	Separate Online Form		YES
Commercial Bin Request	YES		
Dead Animal	YES		
Grass/Weed Removal	In development	YES	
Housing		YES	
Noise Pollution	Separate Online Form	YES	
Playgrounds	In development	YES	
Bulky Uplift	In development	YES	
Street Cleaning/Graffiti/Litter	In development	YES	

However the different portals are intended to provide alternative channels by which customers can contact the council and have their requests serviced.

- 3.4 Broadly the web portal is aimed at those customers who are traditional internet users whilst Looking Local services both those who do not regularly use the internet and those who use mobile web technology (it has the option of using an App as well as the cut down web site). The Members Portal is more specialist and allows Members to log requests direct with Services without the need for the request to be mediated by the CSC or Members Services.

- 3.5 In this way Looking Local extends the interactive customer channel access capabilities of the council as set out in the Process for Change Business Case. It is intended that Looking Local will 'plug in' to the Lagan CRM in the same way as the existing portals; at least for those requests that do not require authentication.
- 3.6 A Lagan payment integration is currently being implemented that will increase the list of services that can be requested via the Lagan web portal, to include those that require a payment such as bulky uplifts. These will not be available via Looking Local due to the Payment Card Industry data sharing regulations.

#### 4. **CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The council's customer service strategy is to maximise the number of channels that customers can use to contact the council and to log service requests using self service. The Looking Local request it and report if functions extend the self service capability further and in doing so it complements the existing web and Members' portals.

#### 5. **IMPLICATIONS**

- |     |                              |   |
|-----|------------------------------|---|
| 5.1 | Policy                       | Part of the existing customer service strategy.   |
| 5.2 | Financial                    | None.   |
| 5.3 | Personnel                    | None.   |
| 5.4 | Equalities Impact Assessment | Increases opportunities for digitally disenfranchised customers to contact the council. |
| 5.5 | Legal                        | None.   |
| 5.6 | Risk                         | None.   |
| 5.7 | Customer Service             | Increases the council's customer contact channels.                                      |

#### **Background Documents:**

N/A

For further information contact Bob Miller, ext.4026

Bob Miller  
Customer Management Project Manager  
November 2012

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**ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL****Short Life Working Group  
Media Platforms****CUSTOMER SERVICES****19<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

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**Use of Gaelic on Council Website**

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**1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 At the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 it was agreed that a report be prepared which looks at the possibility of increasing the use of Gaelic on the Councils website, and any associated financial implications.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the SLWG Members:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report and the options that are available to the Council in terms of increasing the use of Gaelic on the Councils website.

**3.0 DETAIL****3.1 Current Set Up/Website Capabilities**

- 3.1.1 The Website Content Management System, Drupal, has a number of add-on modules that allow multilingual sites to be created. These modules do not offer any automated language translation but rather a simple way for users to switch the language on pages that have been manually translated. All additional modules for Drupal are open source and there is therefore no cost for software. The modules have been successfully tested on a development version of the website.
- 3.1.2 The creation of basic, text based pages on the website (regardless of language) is very simple and can be done by anyone with appropriate permissions. Training would be provided by the Web team. However, the council's Web Team do not speak or write Gaelic and are therefore unable to provide any translation of content or any quality control over content translated by third parties. The web team would continue to have the ability to provide support in all other aspects of maintaining the pages. Once content has been translated into Gaelic for the website, the same information can be sent to the Looking Local system for display on televisions and via mobile phone.

**3.2 Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund**

- 3.2.1 Bòrd na Gàidhlig was established under the powers of The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which also outlines its key statutory functions, including the publication of a National Gaelic Language Plan and granting authority for the Bòrd to require relevant public authorities to produce a Gaelic Language Plan.

3.2.2 The Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) was established to help public authorities in the delivery of commitments in their Gaelic Plans, and in support of the National Gaelic Language Plan. Approximately £1.4M has been made available by the Scottish Government for the fund.

3.2.3 A working group was set up by the Council to develop the next Gaelic Plan for Argyll and Bute. A draft copy of the Plan was discussed at the Chief Executive’s DMT on 5 November, and is scheduled to go to the Community Services DMT and the SMT on 12 and 26 November respectively.

3.2.4 In line with the discussions held at the SLWG, where it was suggested that the use of Gaelic language on the website be increased, there is specific reference to this within the new Gaelic Plan as follows;

Outcome	Success Measures	Target/Timescale
Gaelic is audible and visible in our communities	Website and multi media platforms will have an increasing amount of Gaelic material	As platforms come on stream – at least 30 per cent in Gaelic

3.2.5 The Council could apply for funding through the GLAIF to help achieve this action. The GLAIF provides 80% of costs up to £25K, and supports a range of initiatives, including *“support for the enhanced visibility and status of Gaelic in the dissemination of public information”*.

3.2.6 The funding round for 2012/13 is almost complete, with limited funds available. On this basis, it would be beneficial to wait until the new financial year when funding for 2013/14 becomes available. No formal announcement has been made in regard to the funding programme for next year, but would expect further information to become available in March 2013.

3.2.7 Funding is typically provided on an annual basis, and there is no guarantee that projects successful in a particular funding round will automatically receive support beyond that financial year, and there is the potential that Council’s would be expected to pick up costs in future years from existing budgets.

### 3.3 Translation Services

3.3.1 In order for the Council to increase the use of Gaelic on the Website, translation services require to be used due to the absence of any in house resource. The Council currently utilise the services of a Gaelic translator based on Skye, which is arranged through Ionad Chaluim Chille Ìle (The Columba Centre, Islay). The rate is £105 per 1000 words and there is currently no corporate budget for translation requests.

3.3.2 To reduce the costs associated with using external translation services, it is proposed as part of the Gaelic Action Plan to undertake a skills audit to identify any employees who are fluent in Gaelic and have the ability to translate/proof read.

3.3.3 Highland Council has a Gaelic Translation Unit and there is the potential for the Council to use this service, but would have financial implications. Costs for this service have been requested from the relevant Officer at Highland Council but to date these have not been received.

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Council website has the functionality to allow for multilingual sites to be created, however there is currently no internal resource available to provide translation/proof reading services. The main options available to the council in the short term to increase the use of Gaelic on the website is to apply for funding through the GLAIF, which is likely to be one off for a year, or to continue buying in translation services. In the longer term, there may be the opportunity to utilise the skills of Council employees who are fluent in Gaelic. This will be dependent on the results of any skills audit undertaken and the willingness of current employees to undertake this role.

**5. IMPLICATIONS**

5.1	Policy	Compliance with Council's Gaelic Action Plan
5.2	Financial	£105 per 1000 words if translation service continues to be utilised
5.3	HR	None at present
5.4	Equalities Impact Assessment	None at present
5.5	Legal	None at present
5.6	Risk	None at present
5.7	Customer Service	Potential to increase visibility of Gaelic language in dissemination of public information

9 November 2012

**Douglas Hendry**  
**Executive Director of Customer Services**

For further information please contact;

Laura Cameron  
Executive Support Officer  
Customer Services  
Tel: 01546 604325

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## Webcasting – A Survey of Public Sector Activity

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### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> October the Group requested a survey of multimedia communications activities; with the emphasis on how other councils use web based broadcasting. The aim is to help inform the approach and preparations for introduction of such services to Argyll and Bute Council.
- 1.2 This paper provides the outcomes of that survey conducted using information from the Local Government Association Knowledge Hub and research of related council and public sector organisation websites.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Short Life Working Group Members:

1. Note the information provided below in response to the action from the meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012.
2. Direct if more detailed research is required into any areas covered by this paper.

### 3. DETAIL.

- 3.1 The use of webcasting (live and recorded) of meetings and events has developed significantly in the public sector as software and hardware solutions have taken advantage of developments in microchip and web streaming technology. [Kirklees Council](#) has stated the purpose of their webcasting service as :

... just one way to improve citizen participation, increase engagement and improve communications. The intention of webcasting is not only to broaden opportunities to engage, but to allow the public to see how decisions are made at meetings, in a more accessible, open and transparent way

- 3.2 The most prevalent service provider in this field is [Public-i.tv](#) who have a considerable list of public sector customers including in Scotland:
- Highland Council
  - Moray Council
  - Edinburgh Council

And the following other customers noted on their website:



Public-i state that their governmental customers use the service “build trust and demonstrate transparency”.

### 3.3 Alternative providers include:

[Planetstream.net](http://Planetstream.net) internet TV and secure streaming

[Mediaondemand.net](http://Mediaondemand.net) (Westminster Digital); who have a few councils in their portfolio including [Maidstone Borough Council](http://Maidstone Borough Council).

Some councils simply film their own meetings and stream it on their website using a DIY approach with no service provider. For example, [Thanet District Council](http://Thanet District Council).

### 3.4 The commonest use of webcasts is to broadcast a range of council meetings including:

- Full council
- Executive/cabinet meetings
- Scrutiny and policy committees
- Area, planning and planning development meetings
- Licensing boards and committees

### 3.5 Until recently this tended to be a unidirectional broadcast, however the advent of interactive services via social media has led to the development of webcasts which allow customers to comment on proceedings and to have comments moderated and streamed along with the broadcast or a digest of feedback posted after the event.

- 3.6 Public-i.tv has incorporated such features and packaged it as '[ConnectSocial](#)'. [Cornwall Council](#) use this service and recently achieved the highest number of individuals ever tuning in to a council webcast (4489); albeit the meeting was a high profile one involving a vote of no confidence. They allowed viewers to send comments by live chat, twitter feed and a special speech bubble icon and feedback button on the streaming screen. 242 comments were received from the public during the event.
- 3.7 The second common use of webcasting is to broadcast notable council events that might be of interest to the public or which disseminate knowledge transfer on an important topic to a larger audience than just those who are able to make it on the day. Examples include:
- Hull City Council's [Lord Mayor's Installation Ceremony](#)
  - Fingal County Council who streamed a special Mayor's seminar on [Preparing for \(economic\) Recovery](#)
  - Brighton and Hove Council who broadcast a [Drought Advisory Meeting](#) for businesses
  - Devon County Council who broadcast a public debate on [Public Rights of Way](#)
- 3.8 The British Medical Association use webcasting very intensively for educational and guidance purposes, streaming a series of seminars on topics such as:
- [Becoming a doctor](#)  
[Financial support](#)  
[Applying to medical school](#)  
[Getting noticed, getting published](#)
- It is not difficult to see how this could be translated to council scenarios such as providing guidance for business customers on topics such as trading standards, planning applications, landlords' responsibilities etc. The added benefit of being able to archive such seminars means that they are available as a resource for as long as the information given in the seminar is still current.
- 3.9 The use of webcasting in schools for public broadcasting is limited; it is more commonly deployed to stream information on the secure internal intranet networks, for example where a visiting lecturer or personality visits one high school, but the talk is streamed to all the other schools in the authority. In the United States the streaming of school governance events is more common, however this is often at the level of the elected school superintendant of schools in a particular county, rather than down to PTA level.
- 3.10 In terms of public broadcasting from educational establishments involving pupils and young people, examples include:
- Graduation and award ceremonies, such as that at [Cardiff University](#)
  - Competitions such as the debating competition held by Year 12 pupils at [Coventry City Council](#) to mark Local Democracy Week
  - Youth democracy events, such as Haringey Council's streaming of their [Youth Parliament Election results](#) and of Youth Council Meetings. Kirklees also streams their Youth Council Meetings
  - [Highland Council's](#) broadcast of a Summit on Youth Employment
- 3.11 The commonest issues faced by public organisations doing webcasts are technical issues and take up. Technically, ensuring the quality of the broadcast and that the

camera is on the correct speaker are the fundamentals, however other considerations include:

- Ensuring presentation material (e.g. powerpoint displays) is available and synchronised with the speakers
- Close captioning so the hard of hearing can read what is being spoken
- Indexing of events when they are archived so people can find the elements that they are interested in (some educational webcasts also use a form of keyword search).
- Preparation and testing before each live broadcast – an example of what can go wrong is Fingal County Council's [Mayor's Seminar](#) where the whole mayoral introduction was inaudible because the microphone had not been turned on.

3.12 Given that a prime driver of introducing webcasting is to increase engagement and communication, it is vital that councils maximise their efforts to promote the service and make it available through as many outlets as possible. Some interesting approaches include:

- Allowing local partner and independent websites to embed and stream the content, for example Cornwall Council use 'ThisisCornwall.co.uk' to host their content as it is the most visited website in Cornwall.
- Chester and West Chester Councils package webcasting in with a number of econtact mediums such as an eNewsletter, as part of their ['Talking Together Direct'](#) campaign.



- North Lincolnshire Council has integrated webcasting with their Looking Local digital TV service to make webcast recordings available through the TV as well as PC and smartphones.
- Warwickshire County Council has introduced a thrice weekly 60 second video news update that uses excerpts from webcasts in its recently launched ['Warwickshire News'](#) website. This had over 1000 views in its first week.



- The [South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat](#) authorities have partnered for webcasting so that Police, Fire and Rescue, Integrated Transport and Pensions authorities all share the same platform and hence attract a much wider audience than if they had set up separate streaming sites. It also shares the cost and support effort.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Webcasting (and now interactive webcasting) has become an increasingly standard tool for public sector organisations to use as part of their communication and trust building strategies. This paper details some of the varied methods for which the technology is being used to enhance openness, awareness, learning and involvement of citizens. Also the two common pitfalls of getting it technically right and of promoting the service effectively.

#### 5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1	Policy	Intended to help inform considerations of the correct webcasting approach for the council going forward.
5.2	Financial	None. Background research only.
5.3	Personnel	None.
5.4	Equalities Impact Assessment	None. However it references the need to consider customers with hearing difficulties.
5.5	Legal	None.
5.6	Risk	None.
5.7	Customer Service	References webcasting as medium for enhancing customer service and involvement.

#### Background Documents:

Web based research

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Customer Management Project Manager  
November 2012

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# eParticipate



The eParticipation Trans-European Network for  
Democratic Renewal & Citizen Engagement



*Project of the Year*

Project Evaluation:

## Webcasting by Local Authorities

[www.eparticipate.eu](http://www.eparticipate.eu)



Ayuntamiento de Getafe (Spain)



Mesto Vrutky (Slovakia)



Fingal County Council (Ireland)



Waverley Borough Council (UK)



## Introduction to the evaluation

The *eParticipate* project was set-up to help Local Authorities to use webcasting to re-engage citizens in their democratic process. This evaluation report describes the results of the project for the benefit of Local Authorities wishing to consider implementing webcasting of their democratic processes.

*eParticipation* begins with open and transparent communication between government and the citizen delivered in a way that is accessible to individuals meeting their increasing needs – ‘anytime, anyhow, anywhere’. The *eParticipate* platform centres on multimedia webcasting supported by the inclusion of key contextual information and feedback facilities combined with other communication tools such as on-line consultation. The principle motivation for the creation of the *eParticipate* platform was the need to address the growing democratic deficit in Europe.



The project trialled the service at 4 very different European Municipalities across Europe; Getafe in Spain, Fingal in Ireland, Vrutky in Slovakia and Waverley in the UK. Each site provided live and archived Internet webcasts of local Municipal meetings and other local events, allowing citizens to view them on-line at any time and place, supported by additional information and facilities.

The project worked on using technology to improve current democratic processes. The project team also felt a parallel requirement for a far more radical rework of our democratic systems to both accommodate our greater participatory demands and the opportunities offered by new technologies. This requirement is not discussed as part of this evaluation but it is the belief of the project team that these two tracks, reform and support, both need to be pursued in order to improve democratic engagement.

Creating a business case for a democratic function is a difficult task – democracy does not have a financial value and cannot be judged solely on fiscal outcomes. The project team approached this by looking at different types of benefits and evaluating each of these differently. These types of benefits were broken down as follows: strategic impacts, service improvements and cost benefits.

### DEMOCRATIC IMPERATIVE

*eParticipate* builds on work and collaboration with UK Local Authorities over the last 5 years and from this field experience has categorised the main reasons behind this democratic decline under a few key headings:

- ▶ Lack of trust in the democratic process and the institutions managing the process

1. Blumar, JG and Coleman S., *Realising Democracy Online: A Civic Commons in Cyber Space*, IPPR, London, 2001



- ▶ Lack of understanding as to how to engage
- ▶ Reduced fit between the people's lifestyles and the way in which the process works – accessibility

Evidence to support these conclusions has been corroborated and discussed at length in various other publications, for instance the Power Enquiry in the UK, but is also upheld by the end user research undertaken as part of this project.

The objective of the *eParticipate* project was to improve citizen participation by addressing these issues of building trust and understanding in the democratic process and encourage citizens to start to re-engage with their local democracy. The key democratic measure that the project was looking to improve was a 25% increase in citizen participation in local democratic activities & interactions especially with regards to council meetings attendance and consultation participation. As can be seen in the results this objective was not only met but exceeded.

## EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Any eDemocracy project has its foundations in effective technology. Without easy to use and reliable software eDemocracy is over before it has begun. The *eParticipate* platform performed well throughout the project and is judged to be more than fit for purpose for further roll out.

## SERVICE AND METHODOLOGY

An important strand to the *eParticipate* project is the marrying of appropriate technological offering with supporting service and project management methodology. The methodology used within the *eParticipate* project ensured that the 'soft skills' involved in implementing an eDemocracy project are not forgotten and that the right project team is put together from the start of the project.

eDemocracy projects – in common with many technology led solutions - have a tendency to fail through lack of use or follow through from the project team. The project methodology has been a large part of the *eParticipate* project's success.

## SUMMARY

This summary highlights the learnings from the project from direct feedback from the Local Authorities and their Citizens so that a wider audience can learn from its outputs. There is a need for ongoing evaluation to see what impact *eParticipate* has over the complete cycle of decision making – often a 2 to 3 year cycle – rather than the snapshot which this project was able to offer. That said the overall conclusion of the project team is that the *eParticipate* project has been a complete success and should continue to a wider deployment.

2. Power enquiry, An Power to the People, February 2006, <http://www.powerinquiry.org/>





# Evaluation type 1:

## eParticipation impacts – Democratic evaluation

### INTRODUCTION

The main purpose behind the implementation of the eParticipate project is to increase citizen engagement in Local Democracy. In order to achieve this outcome the project team first needed to analyse and define the problems leading to this democratic deficit. Based on the UK experience and now validated further with the eParticipate evaluation work the project team identified three main issues:

- ▶ Lack of trust in the democratic process and the institutions managing the process
- ▶ Lack of understanding as to how to engage
- ▶ Reduced fit between the people's lifestyles and the way in which the process works – accessibility

eParticipate sought to use democratic video transmissions, presented with contextual information and feedback tools, to address these issues.

### BENEFITS OF THE PLATFORM

In the main part the benefits achieved measured up closely against the expected benefits. The main area where unexpected benefits were achieved were around cost savings – for instance in Fingal the time saving for the officer preparing the minutes of the meeting (see Cost Benefit Analysis for more details).

Benefits have been broken down into three distinct types:

<b>Strategic impacts</b>	Often intangible benefits to the use of webcasting – usually in the area of strengthened democracy or citizen perception.
<b>Service improvements</b>	Changes to the way in which the Local Authority is able to do business
<b>Cost benefits</b>	Actual financial benefits which can be seen as freeing up resources – either people or actual cash.

This division of benefits was created as part of the evaluation process for the UK's eDemocracy National Project.

Overall the model for eParticipation being used is similar to Arnstein's Ladder of Participation - which shows different stages of increased citizen participation which an organisation can move through. eParticipate takes a more citizen focused view of this and simplifies the ladder as follows (figure 1):

3. Originally published as Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224



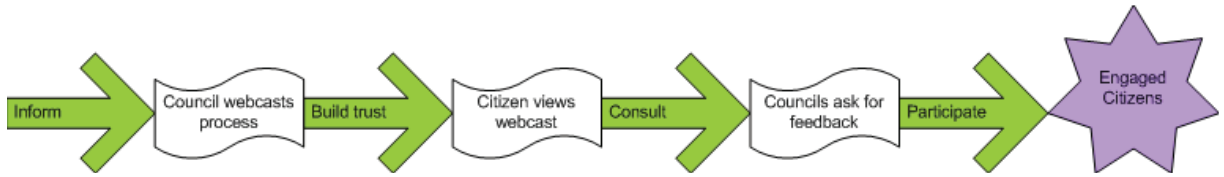


Figure 1 eParticipate model

Rather than the wider scope of the Arnstein Ladder the eParticipate model puts the webcasting of the democratic process at the start of a path towards developing more engaged citizens. The main rationale for this is that only by showing people the process will they begin to trust it and then want to participate. The eParticipate model relies on the efficacy of the use of video in building trust. This is a conclusion which has been supported by the evaluation work on the project.

#### Webcasts output and contents

In all cases the project participants focused on formal meetings as their core content. In the main part these were formal meetings from the fixed location – usually the Council Chamber – but the Mobile webcasting facility was also tested by each Local Authority from different locations as well.

Given that the focus of the project was entirely on democratic content there was no 'privileged' content included in the content plans. Privileged content is not public and should only be seen by officers and members. However the experience in the UK has been that webcasting can have considerable impact on internal communications and as a result should be considered by all webcasting Councils as a way of improving cost effectiveness for the technology.

A number of UK users have done a lot of work with internal focused content – including Waverley, Mole Valley District and Cambridgeshire County. The feedback has been extremely positive as per the following comments from Cambridgeshire County officers:

"This is long awaited. It enables those who wish to see and hear what the authority has to say, rather than through pages of text.

"This is fantastic!!! It did cheer me up no end!. It is more personal and everyone wanted to see it so it's an excellent communication method".

"Brilliant system. Very easy to jump to what I want".

"I have managed to find my way round your system and find it v impressive. As a School Governor we are interested in using this technology for our schools".





## INCREASED MEETING ATTENDANCE

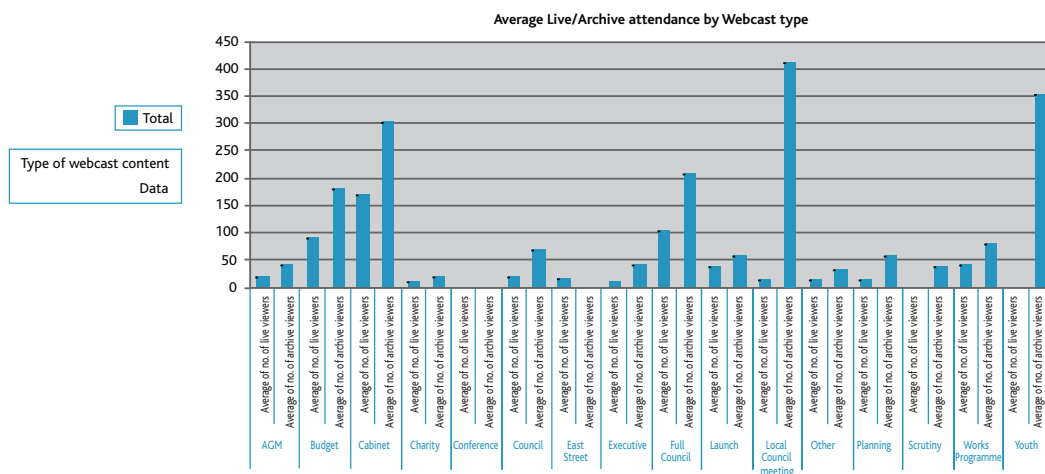
The single greatest democratic measurable from the project was an objective of a 25% increase in citizen participation in local democratic activities & interactions especially with regards to council meetings attendance and consultation participation. In order to measure this during the project 'virtual' attendance – in the form of webcast viewing – was tracked against estimated physical attendance at meetings.

In summary the 25% increase was far exceeded with an average increase of attendance (measured as average viewership / average physical attendance) for the whole project being 613.74%. This figure can also be calculated against the base line physical attendance figures and continues to show an increase of 539.6%

The increase in the average physical attendance was fairly unexpected and could be looked at further. In some part this is due to the fact that some of the content webcasts were larger events than standard meetings – for instance the launch events – but the increase could also part be in response to greater publicity about the democratic process. This is something that the project team would like to look at as part of future research.

Of particular interest is the increase and maintenance of monthly viewership statistics during the project which implies a high viewership return and retention rate. These were analysed from Oct 05 to Aug 06 (using a Webalizer analysis tool).

Partner	Ave visits per month	Total visits over project period
Fingal	999	11,992
Getafe	668	8,010
Vrutky	493	5,921
Waverley	708	8,496





These citizen attendance figures can also be broken down by type of meeting:

What is perhaps more important is the fact that the great majority of citizen's (89% of survey respondents) who have viewed a webcast intend to watch more – an ongoing democratic benefit.

### DEMOCRATIC BENEFITS

As with any democratic project the main difficulty is to assigning a value, i.e. benefit, to public engagement. While the project has looked at non-democratic benefits it was also important to define a suitable metric for the democratic element of the benefits which a platform such as *eParticipate* can bring. As was highlighted in the Service provision section the project team identified a number of benefits from the *eParticipate* platform:

Benefit type	Benefit
Strategic impacts	Increased transparency
	Increased visibility for Members
	Demystification of the democratic process
	Increased trust on the democratic process
Service improvements	Increased accessibility:
	DDA
	Time/Place
	Language

Both user and citizens interviews were carried out and combined with desk research (in particular the work of Stephen Coleman and Ann Macintosh was considered). Based on this research the overall evaluation looked to answer some of the following questions:

- ▶ To what extent and in what ways can the *eParticipation* service and methods make policy information more accessible and understandable to citizens?
- ▶ Did the platform and methods contribute to more openness and accountability in policy-making?
- ▶ Did the *eParticipate* platform and methods encourage and assist the public to participate and facilitate consultation?
- ▶ Did it enhance participation of the socially excluded?
- ▶ To what extent did the *eParticipation* affect policy? To what extent was it meant to affect policy?

All of these questions can be addressed however within the larger framework of trust, understanding and accessibility.

4. [http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/people/?rq=faculty\\_professors](http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/people/?rq=faculty_professors)

5. [http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC\\_Home/ITC/Ann\\_Macintosh.asp](http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC_Home/ITC/Ann_Macintosh.asp)



## TRUST

### Key questions:

- ▶ Did the platform and methods contribute to more openness and accountability in policy-making?



End user research carried out for this project showed that there is a clear message coming from the electorate being that one of the reasons that they don't engage with local politics is that they don't believe that they will have any effect on the process. They see the Local Authorities as a 'faceless' bureaucracy and feel they have little chance of effecting or changing it. Their overall satisfaction with the Local Authorities is low – they do not trust it as a democratic institution.

'I often feel that one will hide behind another.' FINGAL CITIZEN

The use of webcasts to address this issue of trust is the main underpinning of the eParticipate project. The advantages of unedited video over other communication channels are numerous:

- ▶ It enables the viewer to see the source material directly rather than through a filter or an author or editor. This in and of itself has a big impact on trust.
- ▶ It associates the actual actors in the process – usually the politicians – with the content. This makes the content more believable and also 'humanizes' the process – both outcomes building trust
- ▶ By identifying the actual actors the individual accountability is increased
- ▶ It provides an immediacy of communication that other channels are not able to match. Viewers understand that the process is live and happening as they view it rather than being made up post hoc.

The transparency of video makes it possible for the public to see the individual actors in the democratic process – perhaps for the first time. This enables increases their belief in the accountability of the democratic process:

If we accept that for the formal committee process is an important part of policy making then the use of webcasting clearly increases the openness and accountability of that process:

"I think it's been very good for showing the smoke and mirrors side of councils because I didn't know what to expect before I became a councillor a couple of years ago and certainly it's a lot more democratic and transparent than you are always led to believe." UK COUNCILLOR



"By watching the webcast citizens are for the first time getting an idea of how decisions are being made and not just being told the results"

"Thank you for the webcasts; they are very interesting & a great resource for people to be able to see during working hours. This is a good way to become more accountable.", UK, CITIZEN

You do a public meeting and the public ought to know. So I'm all for it, the more I see of this the better I think it is for democracy." UK, COUNCILLOR

"This is an opportunity to show the public that what we do is not only worthwhile but also effective and to see democracy at work. It is open house. The problem is that in the past decisions were made behind close doors. This is changing. The more openness the better. This means more accountability as politicians can no longer say one thing when canvassing and do another in the chamber. Now citizen can verify if they keep their promise." COUNCILLOR, FINGAL



## UNDERSTANDING

### Key question:

- ▶ To what extent and in what ways can our *eParticipation* service and methods make policy information more accessible and understandable to citizens?

With voting and voxpops being tools increasingly relied on by the media citizens are now more likely to have voted for the latest *pop idol* than for their local councillor. The impacts of these votes are seen immediately. One of the impacts of this phenomenon is to further alienate people from the democratic process which is of necessity far more considered and slow

6. Coleman S, A Tale of two Houses: The House of Commons, the Big Brother House and the people at home, Channel 4 and the Hansard Society, 2003



moving. The complexities of where decision making powers do and don't sit further add to the citizen's confusion as to how they affect policy.

The often arcane language of government is a further barrier. As the spoken word tends to be less formal and uses more approachable language this is another area where direct access to the source material of the democratic process – to the meetings – can help.

"This is an excellent medium for an outsider to learn about the work of the council."

'Very informative, it doesn't give you second hand information.'

FINGAL CITIZEN

"An excellent facility and enabled me to obtain a live view and understanding of what was happening almost as well as being there (which I was not able to do)".

"At last we will be able to discover what Councillors actually said rather than the potentially biased version propagated by the local media".

"Gave me a good insight of the workings of the authority. Could be extended to the Consultation meetings".

The other advantage that webcasting has over physical participation is the ability to build a narrative within the context of the formal meeting. So often important issues are dealt with over a series of meetings rather than on a single occasion. Webcasts can be linked together in order to create a story around a single issue which is far more understandable for the public.

### ACCESS

#### Key questions:

- ▶ To what extent and in what ways can our *eParticipation* service and methods make policy information more accessible and understandable to citizens?
- ▶ Did the *eParticipate* platform and methods encourage and assist the public to participate and facilitate consultation?
- ▶ Did it enhance participation of the socially excluded?

Access to the democratic process is vital with any lack of access translating into a lack of empowerment. Accessibility can be considered an issue in a number of different ways:

- ▶ Access to the time and place
- ▶ Accessibility of the language
- ▶ Accessibility for anyone with disabilities

#### Removing barriers of time and place

The obvious benefit here is the fact that citizens can access content where



and when they want. The attendance figures support that fact that this is what people are doing.

Webcast viewers spend on average 9 minutes at a time viewing. This correlates with the typically length of a single item on an agenda and supports the belief that users of the service 'tune in' for the items of interest to them – something which is very difficult to do for a physical meeting:

"I missed the live web cast due to work commitments. I watched the recorded video from Washington DC. It is a really good idea." UK CITIZEN

"There's a basic issue here, and that is that pictures are always a nicer way to reach people than printed paper, and that simple fact means that webcasts have a great advantage over documents". SPAIN OFFICER



In the UK, research undertaken as part of the National Project on eDemocracy also identified that the ability to view meetings from home is of particular interest to older citizens who may not feel safe and secure enough to go to Council meetings.

### Removing language barriers

One further aspect of accessibility was drawn out by the citizen focus groups – participants talked about how intimidating the formal meeting context can be and said that it is far more comfortable for them to view the content at home. The groups also said that viewing a meeting first could make them more likely to attend meetings to speak on relevant issues in the future.

### Disability access

All of these accessibility issues pertain directly to disability access and technology has long been an effective enabler for the disabled in all kinds of areas. The one issue that needs to be discussed more widely with respect to webcasting however is the need to subtitle video content in order to make it 100% accessible. Though this is technically possible it is currently a time consuming and therefore expensive feature of the product. Some research should be carried out into who would benefit from this facility and the best way in which to deliver it.

### Social exclusion

The eParticipate project did not specifically research into socially exclusive groups however a number of the focus group participants from Fingal were on some kind of income or social support. This group was actually notable because of its enthusiasm for the technology – partly as a way of getting informed in a non-threatening manner – but also as a potential way to connect with other Citizens.

The more socially excluded focus group had a much stronger community

7. Steve Carver, Participation and Geographical Information: A position paper, ESF Workshop, December 2001





response to the idea of eDemocracy than the A/B/C/1s who spoke of the ability to contact Councillors directly. Where the higher income bracket citizens looked to the eParticipate tool to link them directly to their Councillor – a one to one relationship – the citizens from a more deprived background saw the community benefits of webcasting. This group were keen to use eDemocracy to connect to other citizens who are interested in the same things.

This was a fascinating research result and one which the project team would like to follow up on in the future.

### FUTURE USE OF THE PLATFORM

In conversation with any Local Authority who is currently webcasting, both as part of the eParticipate project and also as part of the more established webcasting UK Local Authorities, and it is clear that they all see the webcasting of formal democratic content as a starting point and not as an end in itself. Each of the project partners have identified future uses for webcasting such as:

- ▶ Parts of Consultation processes – either meetings or ‘vox pop’ content
- ▶ Community meetings
- ▶ Updates from key officials

From the UK client base there are also ideas such as:

- ▶ Online video magazines
- ▶ Public information films on specific service areas
- ▶ Interviews with senior members/officers by members of the public.

These concepts are all being trialled with UK clients.

### CONCLUSIONS

To what extent did the eParticipation affect policy? To what extent was it meant to affect policy?

The length of the project period was really too short to track a policy through all the committee stages and to results – which is what would be needed in order to truly assess webcasting’s impact on the policy making process. This initial research has shown however that there are tangible impacts on people’s perception of the process and moving forward the opportunity to engage citizens through this medium.

Overall the reaction of the Citizens who took part in this evaluation can be summed up by the following quote from a Fingal resident:





"It is brilliant. I would have no knowledge about FCC and it workings and this has opened it up to me. As a Donabate resident I found it great to be able to follow the progress of the LAP thru the chambers. I now understand more about motions, omnibus motions, out of order motions etc etc. I was a travel agent for many years and we kept the secrets of airline and hotel and car reservations very close to our chests as if it were some form of magic. The internet did away with all that guff so now everyone can see how it all worked and are able to do it themselves. Well I think webcam in the chambers will do that for local government. The public will see how it works, see how difficult/easy it is and will in my opinion, and participate a lot more."



## Evaluation type 2

### Cost benefit analysis

#### INTRODUCTION

As was detailed in Section 1: Benefits from the eParticipate project are being broken down into the following areas:

<b>Strategic impacts</b>	Often intangible benefits to the use of webcasting – usually in the area of strengthened democracy or citizen perception.
<b>Service improvements</b>	Changes to the way in which the Local Authority is able to do business
<b>Cost benefits</b>	Actual financial benefits which can be seen as freeing up resources – either people or actual cash.

This section covers the evaluation of any potential Cost benefits from using the platform. The cost benefit analysis is a core business tool and applying it to a non-business context such as democracy causes some problems. It is possible to make some savings and to contextualise the costs of the project – though a Local Authority considering the use of webcasting would also need to be looking at the other two benefit areas in order to build a compelling case.

#### COST OF DEMOCRACY FORMULA

The cost of democracy formula is a financial calculation which works out the cost of a Council's democratic infrastructure (e.g. staff time required to run a meeting/election service) and expresses it per capita population. It was created by the team at Waverley and it's a useful comparator when looking at *eParticipation* projects.

Using this formula it is possible to put the Local Authority resource spent on the webcasts into context by looking at them as part of the larger democratic picture. The formula looks at the following areas of expenditure:



- ▶ Committee Services Section
  - ▶ Other Sections
  - ▶ Public Relations
  - ▶ Mayor's travel
  - ▶ Members' Travel & Subsistence
  - ▶ Equipment
  - ▶ Printing
  - ▶ Mayor's Allowance / Printing / Use of Council Hall
  - ▶ Members' Remuneration Panel-Fees
- Members' Expenses:
    - ▶ O&S Committees
    - ▶ Monitoring Officer
    - ▶ Subscriptions
    - ▶ Insurances
    - ▶ Twinning
    - ▶ Civic Accommodation
    - ▶ Wages – reception duties
    - ▶ Computer costs

Members' expenses can be further broken down as follows:

- ▶ Training
- ▶ Meeting / Hospitality
- ▶ Councillor Support
- ▶ Telephones
- ▶ Conferences
- ▶ Flat rate Members' allowance
- ▶ Special Responsibility allowances (e.g. committee Chairman / Deputy)



In the case of Waverley the cost of webcasting (including internal resource costs) based on webcasting of 25 hours of meetings a month is 0.03% of the total cost of democratic representation. Alternatively one could state that based on running 25 hours of democratic meetings a month for Waverley each meeting equates to a cost of democracy of £3,869 per hour of meeting. To webcast each hour of a meeting costs a further £70 per hour. This additional cost can then be compared directly to the significant increase in citizen involvement in the meeting.

## COST BENEFITS

On the flip side of the cost analysis there are some cost benefits which can be identified as part of the eParticipate project. In the main part these can be split into three types:

- ▶ Time/Resource saving
- ▶ Actual Cash savings
- ▶ Cash equivalent benefits
- ▶ The table below details each of these areas, examples of benefits as well as indicating which project partner has experienced these benefits:





Area	Benefit	Example of value	Calculation
TIME/RESOURCE SAVING	Time savings for Officers / members	Members do not need to attend meetings at which they are not speaking.	(Average length of meeting) x (Members allowance)
		Officers can work at their desks and join meetings at the appropriate point rather than waiting outside to be called	(Average length of meeting) x (Officer day rate)
	Recording of meetings. Ability for Officers to complete minutes during normal working hours	Officer does not have to take minutes live – saving on overtime costs for evening meetings	(Average length of meeting) x (Officer hourly overtime rate)
COST SAVINGS	Travel savings for Officers / members (reduction in need to pay travel expenses)	Members do not travel to meetings where they do not want to speak.	(Average length of meeting) x (Members travel allowance)
	Reduction in printed matter required to communicate with residents / officers / members	Rather than distributing copies of meeting minutes Citizens can be directed to view the webcast.	Reduction in print budget
	Reduction in costs used to brief staff	Information can be cascaded directly via the webcast rather than through different layers of management	Estimate re: staff time
	Reduction in telephone costs to answer citizen queries	Citizens can be directed to the webcast rather than needing to have a precise of the content of the debate from a member of staff.	Reduce average call length
CASH EQUIVALENT BENEFITS	Comparative advertising spend	In terms of PR, councils using webcasting have (for the reasons identified elsewhere in this business case) received positive coverage and feedback from the public, the press and the Audit Commission; e.g. Devon's estimate that to replicate the positive PR they have received from webcasting would have cost them nearly £300,000	Measured via press clippings service



"I take the minutes and the webcasting has changed my job hugely – I can now connect at any time to do the minutes and I can go back and check the actual record for accuracy – it's a big improvement"

(COMMITTEE SERVICES)

"A half page notice in a national paper costs 15k – since we started webcasting more newspapers are using quotes from our Council as journalists are using the webcasts as a source – this is to my mind a direct cost benefit" HEAD OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS UK COUNCIL

There are two other areas where some savings could be experienced in the future:

- ▶ Potential reduction in any legal defence costs through full actual record of decision making process being maintained
  - ▶ Electronic storage of meetings reducing storage costs of meeting papers
- The creation of a permanent and official video record of democratic meetings would enable consider savings to be made by Local Authorities, not only in the two areas referred to above but also with respect to the time currently spent creating the permanent record – the minutes.

Some local authorities in the UK have been nervous about the idea of the permanent video record – and it is true that in the case of a meeting being at fault the video record would show this. However in most cases the formal process works well and the video record would be the means to speed up the dismissal of spurious actions. In the UK experience all the reports around the use of the video record with respect to legal actions have been positive.

## CONCLUSION

The key identifiable benefits of webcasting formal meeting are clearly at the strategic level where it can be shown to having a real impact on re-engaging the public in the democratic process.

However it is possible for a Webcasting project to justify its investment by providing some meaningful contributions to Local Authority efficiencies through eGovernment. None of these by themselves offer a compelling basis in terms of cost, but together they show that councils can potentially make the outlay on webcasting pay for itself. It should always be remembered that a significant increase in viewership compared with previous attendance at most council meetings is moving towards justifying the cost on its own.

The project showed that the net costs of webcasting is at worst only a very small percentage of what councils already spend on democracy - even if many councils have no formal method of recording their existing expenditure on democracy - and this small cost must be outweighed by the application benefits of webcasting formal meeting. These benefits are clearly at the strategic level where it can be shown to having a real impact on re-engaging the public in the democratic process

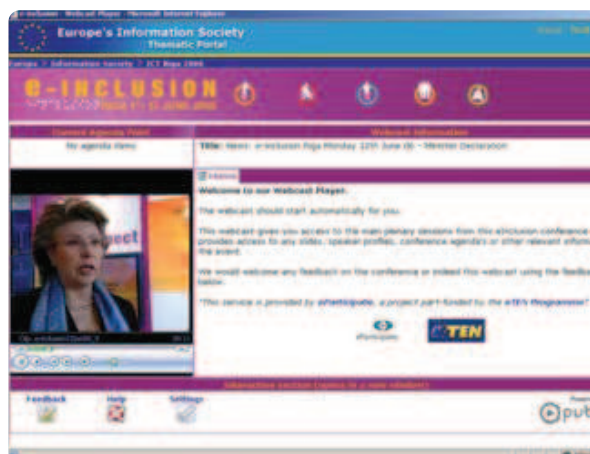


For Local Authorities wishing to make a cost benefit case it is possible to use the structure provided here to do this. However the main hindrance to proving this is the fact that Councils in the main do not seem to look at the cost of democracy and to compare democratic functions in this systematic way – a fact which may be linked to the lack of clear budget for eDemocracy (as discussed in Section 1: Service evaluation).

Overall the *eParticipate* project has been extremely successful – showing that the contextualised use of webcasting to support the democratic process can be seen to improve levels participation of citizens.

What is more there has been shown to be a sustainable business case for the use of the *eParticipate* platform for Local Authorities.

The evaluation process has highlighted specific recommendation for each of the actors in the *eParticipate* project process and these are discussed below:



### Local Authorities

Local authorities can be seen to act in two different spheres – one is the political and the other is the commercial business case. In terms of the political context the evaluation has shown that webcasting can have a positive impact on levels of citizen's participation. These benefits do however require Local Authorities to adequately resource and promote the project and this will need to be stressed to any Authorities taking part in the future deployment.

It has also been shown that it is possible to build a reasonable cost case for the implementation of *eParticipate* – this framework will also be recommended to future participants.

Local Authorities need to ensure that they are not too ambitious with content plans and that they ensure that they get wide buy-in from all areas of the organisation as part of the project process. The *eParticipate* methodology can help frame their thinking on this.

### Citizens

Citizens were shown to value the transparency and openness that webcasting the formal process brings and the viewing figures prove an appetite for this content. What was constantly emphasised in the focus groups however was the need for an effective return path of communication which would enable the citizen to respond to what they are viewing. This return path is something which must be given greater emphasis in the next phase of the project and should be discussed as part of the initial site survey process to ensure that the Local Authorities have considered this and put resources in place to accommodate it.



## eParticipate user comments

"One of our concerns was that with the webcasting we would lose the banter in the physical meetings – but the webcasting does not inhibit people and the meetings are still very spontaneous – this comes across for the webcast viewers as well"



"The minutes only give decisions and not a true picture of the debate – the webcast provides people with that context"

"Surprised at the ease to operate – there was no problem introducing to staff and they were easily able to use it"

"Members took to the webcasting quickly and do not notice the system anymore"

"New channels for reaching people are a key to get economic development policies and other areas. All part of reach-out programme including TV, sms, portal etc."

"Participation in our Council had dropped considerably in recent years before project. This is a very important way for us to improve that".



"This definitely improves the image of the Council as modern with vanguard technology".

"Very much in favour of webcasting. Seeing and hearing is an excellent way to develop a corporate ethos, and to communicate with workforce".

"An excellent idea! I think it'll really improve the 'visibility' of senior managers to use this method for announcements, and it lends the message a much more personal feel".





" Excellent service to provide these webcasts. One hopes that it will result in a raising of the level of debate and reduction in the often childish attempted point-scoring that goes on".

"I was unable to get to the last meeting. Thank you very much for the minutes, and for putting it on the web. I can't make this Tuesday's either and would appreciate the minutes again. Thanks very much".

"I think it's sharpened up the councillors act"

"In general terms it's saying the council is open for business and that's helped a lot of people"

"Webcasting gives residents the means to actually find out if elected officials follow up on campaign promises"

"It opens a lot of doors that you wouldn't normally have thought about for E-Democracy and a lot of people go, "Oh I didn't know you could do that, that's great."

"Taking it out, doing the events for young people, being able to move it around, being able to broadcast particular meetings which you wouldn't normally have done, for example it suddenly opens up a lot more doors"

"We had a public enquiry which was of national significance because of the planning implications on poly tunnels and it was amazing that anybody in the country, any farmer worried about it can log in and check it out"





The *eParticipate* project piloted the use of webcasting by Local Authorities to re-engage citizens in the democratic process. This evaluation report describes the results of the project and contains feedback from citizens, councillors and officers in local authorities in Ireland, Slovakia, Spain and the UK. It addresses the potential strategic impacts, possible service improvements and cost benefits of using webcasting to engage with a local community.

Further information can be found at: [www.eparticipate.org](http://www.eparticipate.org)

Also please see the Local Authorities' webcast sites:

Fingal, Ireland:	<a href="http://www.fingalcoco.public-i.tv">www.fingalcoco.public-i.tv</a>
Vrutky, Slovakia:	<a href="http://www.vrutky.public-i.tv">www.vrutky.public-i.tv</a>
Getafe, Spain:	<a href="http://www.getafe.public-i.tv">www.getafe.public-i.tv</a>
Waverley, UK:	<a href="http://www.waverley.ukcouncil.net">www.waverley.ukcouncil.net</a>



eParticipate Participants, 2006

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****MEDIA PLATFORMS SHORT  
LIFE WORKING GROUP****COMMUNICATIONS TEAM****19 NOVEMBER 2012**

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**MULTIMEDIA OPPORTUNITIES**

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**1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Following the meeting of the Media Platforms Short Life Working Group on 22 October 2012, the Communications team was asked to provide initial views on how Argyll and Bute Council might use multimedia.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The group is asked to note the report.

**3.0 DETAIL**

- 3.1 The Media Platforms Short Life Working Group is currently considering a variety of multimedia options:

- Looking Local
- Proposals on council television channels, including schools
- Webcasts

Views on each of these are outlined below.

**3.2 Looking Local**

Work on Argyll and Bute Council's Looking Local service is well underway with the launch scheduled for Monday 12 November 2012. A detailed communications plan for this has been prepared by the Customer Management Project team. The Communications team can assist with the implementation of this and officers have already assisted with creation of flyers and posters ahead of the Looking Local launch.

**3.3 Proposals on council television channels, including schools**

The SLWG has received proposals on how external providers may be able to deliver council television channels. The communications team has a number of questions about this, namely around editorial control and how suitable content would be sourced and delivered. If such a service is delivered by a provider

which is already involved with the council in its local media role, there is potential for conflict of interest in terms of news coverage. There is also a risk that significant expenditure on communication/PR could, in itself, result in adverse publicity for the council. The involvement of journalists or employees who are not directly employed by the council would need to be carefully considered, especially in light of the work already carried out by the communications team and in terms of consistency of the council's communications approach.

The idea of a council television channel is, though, an exciting one and it would be interesting to examine in more detail if and how we could deliver this in-house. There is lots of potential especially from school television channels and some of our schools have already created their own resources with great success (for example, DGSTV).

Whether a council television channel was delivered by an external supplier or created in-house, the communications team feels it would be essential to have a clear procedure and guidelines in place regarding editorial content and control, to ensure a good fit with the team's action plan and the council's agreed communications strategy, and to maintain consistency in the messages and information we are sending out.

#### **3.4 Webcasts**

There is potential for the council to make much more use of webcam and webcast technology.

Straightforward, essentially unedited webcam broadcasts of council meetings made available on the council's website using YouTube or similar would be cost-effective, open and transparent. There would be cost implications in terms of suitable equipment and it would be important to be able to provide a quality broadcast.

Another possibility is more active and creative use of YouTube/similar technology to provide video features or interviews for upload to the council's website – for example, interviews with lead councillors following major meetings and decisions; budget/other updates; positive video features about council services and projects. The communications/web team already have a small video camera which (along with some basic operation training that could be sourced locally) could reasonably achieve this. This approach would be cost-effective and a good introduction to use of multimedia, as well as being relatively low-risk in terms of cost, publicity or impact on existing workloads.

YouTube is very cheap and the council's use of this has been limited. It might be a reasonable practical approach to start off at this level before incurring significant expenditure. Customer surveys carried out in autumn 2011 indicated that 89 per cent of customers preferred to find out news and information about the



council through local newspapers. While it is important to make the best use of rapidly changing modern technology and social media, it is equally vital to recognise how our customers prefer to hear from and about us, and consider any significant investment accordingly.

Video-conferencing is to be explored in more depth, including examining the UHI model, and it is suggested that we investigate multimedia in the same way.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Looking Local is under way and is the subject of a separate, detailed report.
- 4.2 Using multimedia has potential but it would be helpful to investigate further how we might start to make more use of this in-house before significantly involving external suppliers.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Policy - none
- 5.2 Financial - none
- 5.3 Legal - none
- 5.4 HR - none
- 5.5 Equalities - none
- 5.6 Risk - none
- 5.7 Customer Service - none

**Douglas Hendry**  
**Executive Director of Customer Services**  
8 November 2012

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