

## **Looking Local Service Coverage**

---

### **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