

Task Force Strategy

Information Communications Technology

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**The Objective One Partnership
for Cornwall and Scilly**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ICT Task Force is pleased to present a Strategy for the Cross-Cutting Theme of ICT.

The Strategy first sets out the **Vision** of what is planned to be achieved and then gives some background on the **Principles** that have guided the thinking, the **Priority Themes**, where it is considered that development should be focussed, and the **Key Issues** to be tackled. It concludes with recommendations on **Delivery** and **Actions**.

The Vision is ***To Switch On Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as an ICT-enabled region, in which empowered individuals, businesses and communities are equipped with the necessary understanding, knowledge, skills and infrastructure to embrace the benefits of ICT relevant to their own needs and aspirations.***

The principles followed are that the approach should be people-centred, offering equal opportunities to all groups. Physical works should be in keeping with Cornwall's quality environment. The strategy for ICT in Cornwall should be integrated into national strategies and programmes and should also encourage a co-ordinated approach to ensure financial sustainability and best practice. Finally the ICT Task Force itself should lead by example in programme management and delivery.

To accelerate and enhance the delivery of Cornwall's SPD Objectives, there are five priority themes on which to concentrate. These are raising the competitiveness of businesses, developing ICT access in the community, increasing learning opportunities, enhancing knowledge incubation and transfer and improving programme management and public consultation.

The key issues are access, infrastructure, content/applications and empowering the people of Cornwall. A number of strategic approaches are suggested which would improve access to all sections of society, both commercial and community. The approach on infrastructure is to encourage growth from the existing base, making sure that the growth is co-ordinated and sustainable whilst improving services in line with likely demand. It is recognised that an essential role is to be played by content and applications, which should be very high quality, directed at sustainable demand and provide sustainable benefits and wherever possible "Made in Cornwall". The main points for people empowerment are to encourage the people of Cornwall to want and be capable of sharing in the benefits of ICT by improved training, by enhanced support services and by championing and marketing success.

Three main methods of delivery were considered. The first is through the appointment of a full time Co-ordinator for the ICT Task Force who will be responsible for publishing and updating criteria for projects and engage with the bidders and other task forces to provide advice and guidance. The two further delivery mechanisms require further refining. The Task Force considers that the optimum way to achieve delivery of complex projects is to engage the main stakeholders in an organisation, probably a company, which will aggregate demand and take the projects to the market in a co-operative, coherent and speedy manner. The Task Force plans to develop this concept. Finally the Task Force wishes to investigate the appointment of an E-champion for Cornwall to promote development of e-commerce in Cornwall in line with local priorities and national strategy.

ICT STRATEGY FOR CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY

1. The Vision

To Switch On Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as an ICT-enabled region, in which empowered individuals, businesses and communities are equipped with the necessary understanding, knowledge, skills and infrastructure to embrace the benefits of ICT, relevant to their own needs and aspirations.

The key challenge which the ICT strategy addresses is to turn conditions of low ICT usage into those which accelerate usage and thereby to drive and enable the Programme activities and objectives and to achieve “a step change in economic prosperity in Cornwall and Scilly.”

The ICT strategy sets out the **principles, priority themes** and **key issues** that inform these recommendations.

2. Principles

The ICT strategy has been guided by six key principles:

A people-centred approach. The priority of the ICT strategy for Cornwall and Scilly should be to equip the target beneficiaries of the Programme with the understanding, knowledge, skills and infrastructure they need to realise the benefits of ICT in a way that is relevant to their own aspirations and needs.

Equal opportunities will be enshrined in the planning, operation and delivery of the ICT strategy. Equality of access to ICT will be promoted, particularly in areas of social exclusion.

To ensure that physical works are carried out with due attention to Cornwall’s quality environment.

Integration of ICT in local and national sectoral strategies and projects. ICT projects should not be stand-alone, but be embedded as enabling mechanisms in local and sectoral strategies and projects. Local Authorities and others delivering public services will be encouraged and facilitated to enhance the service delivery in Cornwall by making full use of developments in the Internet and other ICT delivery channels. The uptake of e-commerce by businesses should be promoted in line with national strategy and local priorities.

ICT Task Force is to be an exemplar of best practice and recognised as the leader for co-ordinated Programme Management and delivery.

A strategic approach to the key issues of access, infrastructure, content and applications and people empowerment to encourage co-ordination, financial sustainability and best practice.

3. Priority Themes

There are 5 priority areas where ICT development should be focussed to accelerate and enhance delivery of Cornwall's SPD Objectives:

1) Raise the competitiveness of businesses

- Through the effective use of ICT to add value to SMEs by improving business management, access to markets, market knowledge, e-commerce, business to business networking and technical and financial information.
- Tailored to the needs of SMEs in general; SMEs in new and key growth sectors; SMEs in sectors undergoing structural adjustment; new start SMEs
- By establishing Cornwall as an attractive location for inward investment

2) Increase access to learning opportunities

- For those in full-time education, in employment, the unemployed, and others, at a time and location that suits their needs.
- By focusing on identified generic and sector-specific demand

3) Develop community capacity

- Improve access to information, services, employment and training opportunities
- Promote networking within the community and with other communities
- Develop skills, confidence and self esteem
- Support micro-businesses and community businesses

4) Enhance knowledge transfer and incubation

- Strengthen the links and collaborative activity between centres of excellence in business, research and development institutions, and academic facilities

5) Programme Management and improved public consultation

- Between local partners and stakeholders in the planning and delivery of strategies and projects.
- To provide a faster and more effective route for leveraging capital modernisation funds into the County.

4. The Issues

There are a number of challenging issues which need to be addressed in developing an ICT strategy which will enable Cornwall to maximise the opportunities which ICT makes possible. Essentially, these are the issues of *access, infrastructure, content and applications and people empowerment*.

Access

Everyone must be able to have access to ICT, whether at home, work, in education, in a community facility, or on the move. Access should be provided through a range of appropriate locations and devices. A number of issues have been identified:

- There is a need to ensure that a full range of business premises are ICT-enabled, from “easy-in, easy-out” starter units to larger wired buildings for established local companies or inward investors.
- To maximise the value of such premises, thought should be given to providing communal facilities, e.g. relaxing work style cafes, video conferencing centres or meeting rooms with the latest technology. Those developments should be located near the existing or planned tertiary education establishments to facilitate and encourage technology transfer.
- Hotels, conference venues and meeting rooms in government offices and educational establishments should be equipped to meet demand for state of the art audio-visual and ICT facilities.
- There needs to be a coherent strategy for provision of learning centres/community access facilities to serve identified catchment areas, particularly in areas of social exclusion. All centres should ensure ease of access for disabled groups. Centres may well be mixed developments incorporating leisure/sport/library facilities, and/or post office or community banks in the same location. It may well be that the key requirement in such buildings is not the ICT facilities themselves but the access to them, in its widest sense, including support facilities and trained champions.
- ICT should be used to support those sections of the community often excluded from full participation by providing a wide range of communication, hardware and software solutions to overcome their disadvantages
- Investment in ICT by businesses, individuals and communities should be encouraged.

Infrastructure

The telecommunication infrastructure needs to be capable of supporting demand at an appropriate speed and quality of access across Cornwall. The ICT strategy should also ensure that Programme resources are deployed to establish an environment which will enable effective future public and private sector investment.

It is clear that currently there are areas of the county where the existing/likely future demand does not encourage proactive investment. The issue was brought into sharp focus with the government's recent radio spectrum auction, which faltered because interest has only been shown in the most densely populated regions, where the return is more obvious and immediate. As a result, Cornwall is not in the vanguard of broadband provision by BT, cable companies and other providers.

In order that service providers perceive Cornwall as a more viable and attractive market for investment, there needs to be a demonstrable demand level which would make infrastructure uplift financially viable.

Key issues for the ICT strategy are therefore to:

- Encourage greater usage of infrastructure already in place e.g. Internet access via a wide variety of facilities at an “always on” tariff, to ensure individuals, businesses and communities are taking advantage of the benefits of digital communication, and to stimulate the demand for further investment.
- Ensure the delivery of broadband services in areas of likely demand.
- Ensure access to, and delivery of services in remote communities commensurate with demand.
- Encourage collaboration between high-capacity public sector networks to widen access and usage, and open up such networks to the private sector where demand exists.
- Understand and take advantage of the investment criteria of private sector suppliers
- Make sure that infrastructure developments are integrated, co-ordinated and compatible, thereby avoiding unnecessary duplication or fragmentation, and expensive subsequent revision. Ensure that they are sustainable post Objective One.

Content and Applications

- Relevant and attractive content and applications are absolutely critical in terms of maximising the benefits of ICT.
- Projects should procure or stimulate a variety of content and applications focussed on the needs of the target beneficiaries that will drive sustainable demand and benefit.
- Content and applications should be benchmarked against world best standards.
- Where possible, local companies should be encouraged to develop content and applications, which meet the above criteria.

People Empowerment

- There needs to be understanding and buy-in from individuals, businesses and communities to the benefits of ICT, and provision of appropriate support. This takes a number of forms:

Marketing

- Ensure that projects are clear about their target groups/audience and that the benefits of ICT and the project are communicated to those groups/audience in a way which will engage them.
- Also, clear signposting in the community of projects as they are brought to life and support for local champions to gain maximum publicity for early “wins”.

Training and Mentoring

- Ensure that all learners are encouraged and facilitated to reach an accredited level of training relevant to their needs and potential by setting clear, ambitious and measurable targets that meet current and future demand for skills in Cornwall.
- Involve employers in the identification and relevance of ICT and ICT training as a key part of improving competitiveness. To involve employers in measuring demand for training.
- Assist in the further development of a Cornish training initiative to deliver appropriate and easily accessible training to all groups in society via imaginative and innovative use of ICT
- Identify and engage local mentors to sustain the development of ICT training.

It should be noted that ICT training is not only an opportunity to improve ICT skills but also opens a gateway to other online learning by enabling access any time, any place, any pace.

Local Champions

- Projects should seek to engage, develop and work with local and sector champions who know and are trusted by local communities of interest. Measures should be developed to support champions, including establishing links between local champions in neighbouring or different communities to share practice and tasks.

Technical Support and Advice

- Provision should be made to ensure there is appropriate advice and sustainable technical support for the installation and maintenance of network, hardware and software applications associated with projects. Where possible this should include training and mentoring of locally-based people to service equipment and applications which can sensibly be supported locally.

Best Practice

- Ensure that a mechanism for sharing practice and experience is established which encourages innovative behaviour, and networking and interaction between communities. This should incorporate best practice methods for training and knowledge sharing.

Monitoring and Tracking

- The achievement levels of project beneficiaries should be monitored and impact analysis should track and record the project's delivery against the priorities and objectives set out in the Single Programme and Programme Complement Documents.

5. Delivery of the ICT Strategy

There needs to be appropriate leadership and an administrative-commercial model which promotes the principles of operation outlined above. It is proposed that these issues be addressed by:

- **Appointment of an ICT Task Force Co-ordinator**

To provide high quality independent advice to task forces

To give guidance to potential bidders

To publish and update criteria for scoring potential projects

- **The ICT Task Force has identified the separate role of E-Champion to promote the development of e-business in Cornwall in accordance with local priorities and national strategy. The feasibility of this role is to be investigated.**
- **Examine and develop the options for a stakeholder company, consisting of public, private and third sector partners, as a commercial-administrative vehicle for delivery of the ICT strategy.**

Stakeholder Company

Organisations will be invited to join the Stakeholder Company based on an assessment of the resources that they are prepared to make available and their ability and willingness to provide impartial solutions to Cornwall's developing ICT demands.

It is envisaged that the role of the Stakeholder Company would be to:

- Facilitate delivery of the strategy in accordance with the above
- Provide a forum for project partnerships within which the co-operative framework has already been agreed and thereby considerably reduce lead-time for project submission and accelerate implementation.
- Work within the strategic framework to set out criteria for access, infrastructure, content and applications, people empowerment in relation to project submissions
- Establish demand and agree access and infrastructure needs and aggregate into a phased delivery programme to reduce costs and enhance sustainability
- Source world class best practice
- Stimulate new project work where necessary

The benefits of this type of model are:

- Leadership, ownership and accountability to enhance and accelerate delivery of the programme objectives and promote linkages between them
- Resources deployed in co-ordinated and cost-effective manner

- Encourage greater participation, investment and commitment from the public and private sector
- Sharing accountability amongst partners to enhance ownership and responsibility
- Enable a diversity of local and sectoral projects, whilst ensuring county-wide economies of scale
- Encourage innovative approaches, whilst building on existing work
- Track effectiveness and success of initiatives and stimulate action where necessary

6. Recommended Actions

- 1) Develop the criteria, and accompanying guidance, by which projects will be assessed in terms of ICT relevance.
- 2) Engage with priority working groups, and task forces, and other appropriate sector groups to ensure the ICT strategy is integrated in their approach.
- 3) Work with the priority working groups and task forces, commission research into ICT world-class best practice in each of the themed areas identified in the ICT strategy.
- 4) Develop options for the constitution and operation of the stakeholder organisation, with appropriate public and private sector partners, setting out clear operating relationships with the priority working groups, task forces and other relevant bodies.

The members of the Consultation Group are as follows:

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Lynn File*	Lynn File Associates
Simon Goodwin	NHS
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John Horne*	PROSPER
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Trish Jones*	BT
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* Denotes members of the Task Force