

In Our View *Focus*



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FEATURING COVERAGE OF

**Digital innovations
for Northern Ireland
local councils,
29 March**



EVENT CO-PRESENTED BY



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Bradford's digital strategy focuses on connections, kit and skills

Bradford is planning to install ducting for internet suppliers to help establish gigabit speed connections across its district. The plans were presented during an online event held by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) and Socitm on 29 March.

Paul Wilson, the city's digital lead, said that more than 6,000 city centre premises including many businesses have connection speeds of less than 30 megabits per second. It plans to encourage fixed and 5G broadband providers to establish services by providing ducting and fibre in the centre and along the five-mile Keighley and Worth Valley heritage railway.

Developing a 'connected district' is one of four themes in Bradford's digital strategy, along with data-driven decision making, digital economy

and digital inclusion. Other projects include Virtual Bradford, a digital twin of the city developed in collaboration with the University of Bradford that can be used for purposes including planning and citizen engagement.

Wilson told the event the city's digital strategy has involved elected members and officers in its development, including appointing a councillor as a digital champion. He has also highlighted successes elsewhere, which can involve engaging local rivalries: "I've played the Leeds card a few times."

Sharon Sanders, digital inclusion programme manager, said that the city's ambition is that no-one is digitally excluded through lack of access to devices, affordable connectivity or necessary skills. It has included the distribution of 1,700



"Assumptions are made that older people can't use technology, younger people can"

*Sharon Sanders,
City of Bradford Council*

Sim cards providing free mobile data, texts and calls through the Good Things Foundation's National Databank, but also providing support to help people use technology along with evaluating the impact of these initiatives to see what works.

Research can challenge received wisdom, she added: "Assumptions are made that older people can't use technology, younger people can." For example, only half of 3,000 devices provided by Bradford to families during the pandemic were used. Reasons included a lack of digital skills among both children and their parents. This meant some adults were reluctant to allow their children to use the devices as they felt out of their depth. The council plans to include digital skills sessions for parents in its summer holidays activity programme.

Consider technology risks with opportunities, Socitm says

The increasing use of Internet of Things technologies by local authorities in communities, such as to monitor traffic, can provide new options for attackers, Socitm's director of policy and research Martin Ferguson said. He told a session on the society's digital trends research that international colleagues stress the importance of cyber resilience: "We have to be very conscious as we bring on board these technologies of

the risks that they bring, as well as the opportunities for improving how people live."

Martin added that artificial intelligence (AI), digital twinning and cloud computing all attract a lot of interest. However, there are issues to consider including the ethics of AI, showing that digital twins are useful in practice and considering when it is better to retain data within an organisation's own systems rather than use cloud-based options. Public services also need to be mindful that they support an inclusive range of channels including apps, web, phone and face to face, he added.

See more

Bradford's digital strategy:
bit.ly/434KZ4H

Good Things Foundation
National Databank:
bit.ly/3nE6fOx

Socitm's public sector digital trends 2023: bit.ly/3KvIa5z

Derby battles overflowing bins with built-in sensors

Derby City Council is managing its street and park bins more efficiently with technology. The use of built-in sensors that report how full they are is resulting in fewer overflowing bins and complaints, the event heard.

Except when streets were being cleaned routinely, the city previously emptied on-street bins outside busy areas in strict rotation every few weeks. "Until you turned up to each of the bins, you really didn't know whether they were full, or only half-full, three-quarters full or just completely overflowing," said Samantha Kelly, the city's Streetpride service manager for street cleansing.

Derby has installed hundreds of sensors provided by REEN, which use distance-sensing technology to check how full bins are, as well as a tilt mechanism and GPS location



tracking to see if they have been damaged or moved. The data is sent with Sim cards through mobile networks to a cloud-based service, which can generate optimised route for bins that need emptying and use machine learning to predict which will be full soon. In some cases, the city has increased collections from a bin by 300% while halving visits overall.

Kelly said that overflowing bins stop people from responsibly disposing of rubbish. "Bins are really important to us, because they are the public doing the right thing," she said.

Lee Wheatley, Derby's service manager for grounds maintenance, said that his department has integrated bin sensor data with its existing management system. When it started using the sensors, staff were collecting some bins that were just 40% full but now this has risen to 85%, freeing staff to do other work.

Kelly said the council worked to help staff adopt the technology, including a test environment and a buddy system to help less confident workers. The data produced also means staff can provide evidence for moving or adding a bin, rather than just expressing an opinion. She added that despite its cost, the sensor network has been welcomed by elected members as they hear a lot of complaints about overflowing bins.

Wheatley added that Derby is considering adding sensors to its grit bins to track when they need refilling.



"Bins are really important to us, because they are the public doing the right thing"

*Samantha Kelly,
Derby City Council*

Beware business email compromise warns Jisc

Criminals are increasingly targeting finance and IT professionals aiming to defraud organisations and compromise systems, Jisc security specialist Paul Knee told the event.

"We have seen a massive uptick in business email compromise, utilising various techniques to bypass multifactor authentication," said Knee, the education technology provider's head of protective services, in the first three months of 2023. This has seen finance departments paying fake invoices apparently sent by trusted colleagues, in some cases for tens of thousands of pounds.

Knee added that cyber attackers, who usually work in organised groups rather than as lone hackers, target IT specialists to gain control of core services they manage such as identity management and back-up systems. The attackers can then encrypt and extract files, then demand a ransom to decrypt files, sell personal data extracted to other criminals or both.

In 2022, Jisc recorded 20 major incidents, with two cases in the final three months of the year leaving two further education providers unable to operate, as well as dozens of distributed denial of service attacks.

NCSC advice on business email compromise:
bit.ly/42Y64xC

Jisc cyber impact report 2022: bit.ly/3lUcWeX



Nations and regions news

To pass on local authority IT news, please email inourview@socitm.net

Scotland

South Ayrshire Council is using a map-based community consultation platform provided by Esri UK to provide residents with information on planning issues, including the production of a new local development plan.

bit.ly/3JWCBLI

Wales

Powys Council's cabinet member for internet connectivity, Cllr Jake Berriman, has warned that changes to the UK government's broadband subsidy programme could limit choice for customers in mid-Wales and damage the area's economic prospects.

bit.ly/40nnSAAt

Northern Ireland

Belfast City Council is planning a Smart District that will allow companies and local academics to test ideas and technologies that will tackle urban challenges, using funding from the £120 million Belfast Region City Deal.

bit.ly/42Pufy9

Republic of Ireland

Dublin City Council has published street-by-street air quality data, gathered over 16 months by electric cars run by Google Street View with pollution sensors provided by Aclima, followed by a three-day hackathon at Google Ireland's offices.

bit.ly/3G1GNJc

North-east England

Sunderland City Council has installed 10 infrared temperature sensors in roads to provide forecasts to its road gritting teams, using a new wireless network designed to handle low volumes of data over wide areas.

bit.ly/3nob0vn

Yorkshire and the Humber

Hull City Council is testing touch-free technology designed to help people who find it difficult to use buttons in bus stops and pedestrian crossings, with the latter activated by holding a hand underneath the standard unit.

bit.ly/3TW03xl

North-west England

Stockport Council is leading development of a digital patient journey management system that will help patients move from hospital to adult social care, with £82,000 from the government's Local Digital Fund.

bit.ly/3ntgYvb

East Midlands

Nottingham City Council has secured £375,000 from the Local Digital Fund to further develop its use of 3D technology in the planning application process, working with Bradford Council and the University of Nottingham.

bit.ly/3nuwE1e

West Midlands

Warwickshire County Council is extending its use of distance learning robots provided by Norwegian company No Isolation that allow children who cannot attend schools to take part in lessons virtually.

bit.ly/3IJsVwp

East of England

Broxbourne Borough Council and **Welwyn Hatfield District Council** in Hertfordshire have awarded Liberata a contract worth up to £30 million over a decade and covering areas including council tax, business rates and revenues and benefits.

bit.ly/3TUIXB7

South-east England

Southampton City Council is installing 18 air quality monitors from specialist provider EarthSense in and around the city to collect and publish real-time data on PM2.5 particulate matter from wood burners.

bit.ly/40GLNL6

South-west England

Bristol City Council has chosen Fujitsu as its 'digital strategic partner' in a five-year, £25 million deal that started on 31 January 2023 to support a long-term digital transformation strategy.

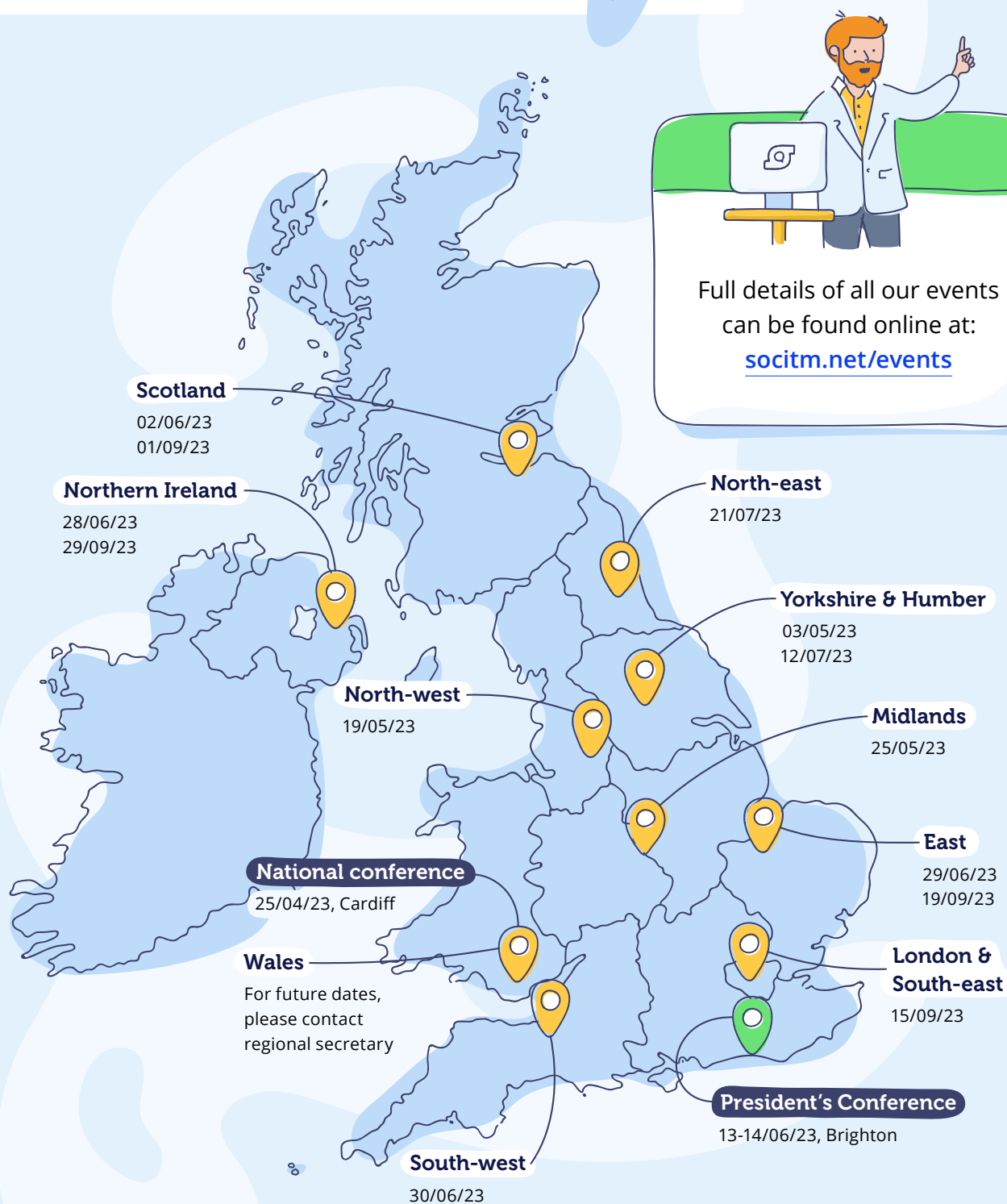
bit.ly/40gHAXX

London

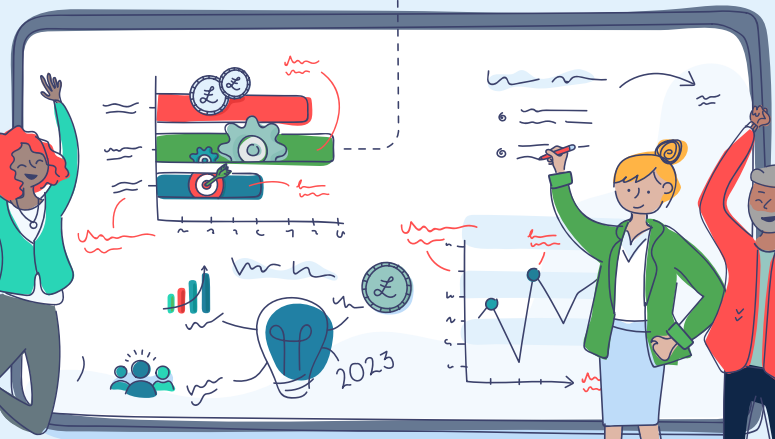
Croydon Council's financial challenges mean its technology team is under intense scrutiny and has to demonstrate benefits continually, head of digital services Opama Khan told the PublicTechnology Live event on 1 March.

bit.ly/3TW7mFw

Local and national events calendar



Full details of all our events
can be found online at:
socitm.net/events



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