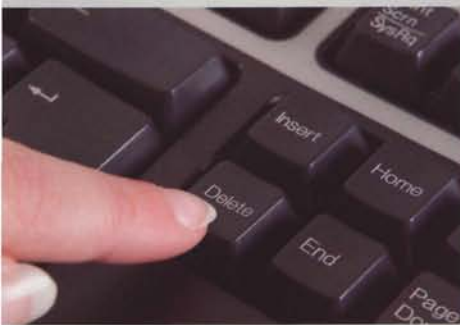
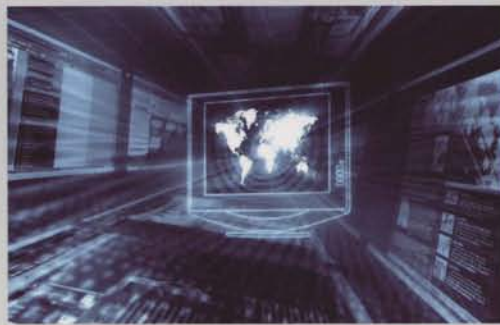


Government Technology

The Business Magazine for Government Technology



**SOFTWARE
COMPLIANCE**



DIGITAL INCLUSION



ACCESSIBILITY



MOBILE WORKING

Sunderland City Council's journey
into democratic cyberspace

PLUS Nomad update

IT TRAINING – Informal learning and the integration of learning and work

FINDING NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Nomad, the former local government project promoting mobile and flexible working, is seeking to establish a new future and niche role. Ken Eastwood, assistant director at Barnsley MBC and national lead for Nomad gives an update on the initiative

IT'S BEEN NEARLY A YEAR since Barnsley rescued Nomad and agreed to give the network a new home and to support ongoing activity in Scotland.

We've been trying hard to sustain activity and to secure funding to support the launch of Public Sector Nomads. Despite our best efforts this is taking some time but we remain committed to finding a sustainable way forward for Nomad. It remains our view that new ways of working enabled by technology will be critically important to the future public sector and peers have repeatedly told us that Nomad has a unique and valued role to play.

HELP THROUGH COLLABORATION

The austerity measures and the much-maligned "bonfire of the quangos" are having opposing effects across the public sector landscape. The spending review presents enormous challenge to the sector and will require organisational change and transformation on a scale not seen before, yet at the same time sources of advice and support are rapidly disappearing. It is clear that investment with big consultancies is likely to significantly reduce as all spend attracts scrutiny from armchair auditors. Nomad considers the solution is to develop sector led improvement capacity and to

adopt a community approach to collaboration.

Recognising the drive towards increased collaboration and opportunities arising from Total Place and Place Based Budgeting, Nomad is broadening its role to span the whole public sector. We've seen some interesting mobile working projects emerging in community health and there's enormous opportunity to share learning and to develop new approaches that are holistic and span organisational boundaries. In the future we can expect to see technology solutions that revolve around the citizen rather than the organisation and there are considerable challenges to be overcome in terms of sharing standardised data in multiple environments without compromising security.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Nomad has also spread its wings beyond pure mobile to consider new ways of working enabled by technology in the broadest sense. As technologies mature and our familiarity with deployment increases, we see opportunities bigger than individual line of business applications.

Increasingly, organisations are considering enterprise approaches to mobile and flexible working and adoption of new policies to support 21st century work styles and to reduce

accommodation requirements. Hot-desking and touchdown facilities are becoming increasingly popular as organisations look to significantly reduce their real estate. Reluctance to change and to adopt radically different approaches to how we work is being challenged by economic factors and to some extent by carbon reduction commitments, though the latter is yet to have the impact it surely will in the foreseeable future.

Elsewhere we're seeing the development of work hubs and collaborative shared workspaces that may be a sign of what's to come in the public sector. As organisations seek to collaborate more closely it's possible that non-territorial shared public sector workspaces may emerge. That's an exciting concept but one fraught with technical difficulty at the present time given that the shared facilities developed to date have tended to operate with entirely separate and duplicate infrastructures. Clearly, the government cloud and the public network should open up opportunity here.

NEXT GENERATION SERVICES

Next generation broadband infrastructures are real game changers and we're seeing early signs of that in Barnsley and South Yorkshire with our Digital Region Programme



MOBILE WORKING

(www.digitalregion.co.uk), developing a technology foundation that greatly supports our vision of getting all residents and businesses online by 2012. These networks properly support telework and the delivery of next generation services such as telemedicine, that have the potential to significantly reduce cost.

As promising as these technologies may be, Nomad believes mobile will have a key role to play in the future with current projections suggesting 85 per cent of the population will be carrying a smart phone inside of only two years. We're trying to think ahead in terms of what that will mean to how people access services. There's a huge opportunity there, and we need to get behind what it will mean in terms of reporting and requesting a service, and for access into our organisations for citizens. But also for how we can push information back into our communities.

Nomad is seeing a need for a catalogue of tools and applications to support new ways of working. As the public sector seeks to embrace organisational wide change, there needs to emerge clarity around the underpinning technologies and supporting policies. It's unfortunate that incremental change continues to result in unnecessary duplication of effort as we explore how technology can support new ways of working. Take video conferencing as a good example. The majority of public sector organisations have not yet fully embraced video conferencing and many are implementing pilots and evaluating solutions. From a technology point of view that's fine, inevitable really. However, we should seek to coordinate and share that activity and look at whether we can procure jointly too.

CHANGE OVER TIME

Beyond that, the challenge is in adoption and that doesn't just happen overnight either. Here new economic drivers are rapidly emerging, however. Travel costs are significant and easy budgets to reduce. In many parts of the sector we work the way we've always worked with little challenge to routine attendance at regional or national meetings. In the context of significant downsizing and job losses there's emerging a different perspective. For many video and web conferencing is new and more than a little quirky, but these technologies will increasingly become mainstream and with some support and facilitation usage will become universal.

Perhaps what needs to emerge is a shared resource library and a dynamic project catalogue. It's certainly something we'd be keen to develop. Thinking simplistically, people often want to know what is available now, that is proven to work and how that can successfully be deployed. A catalogue approach could meet these requirements and Nomad believes it should be supported with straightforward guides, toolkits, eLearning packages and events and workshops.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Eastwood BSc. (Hons) MCIEH is an assistant director at Barnsley Council in South Yorkshire where he leads Regulatory Services including Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services. He has a number of corporate leadership roles, including Innovation and Mobile & Flexible Working.

An Environmental Health Officer by profession, he began his local government career in 1985 in Liverpool and worked in Bradford for 15 years, before joining Barnsley in 2002.

Ken was a board member of UK Government's Project Nomad and previously led the Project Nomad Cemetery Headstone Safety proof of concept and more recently led the national ReGS Project, implementing mobile and flexible working solutions across Regulatory Services, in partnership with Sheffield City Council. He has spoken at and chaired many conferences, seminars and workshops including eGov and tGov events. Ken is leading the transformation



of Nomad, seeking to build a sustainable, public sector wide community of interest.

Ken has been an advisor to government on data sharing, new work styles and the better regulation agenda and he has a passionate interest in new ways of working and about technology enabled change.

Ken has recently founded Public Sector Nomads, as a successor to Project Nomad.

We know there is a lot of peripheral technology that can be deployed to better support new ways of working. Cloud based file storage, instant messaging, IP telephony, virtual worlds, web and video conferencing etc, all have a role to play in meeting the needs of 21st century organisations. We're missing an independent source of advice on how these technologies should be used within the public sector at the present time.

Social technologies are also developing rapidly and the public sector is struggling to keep up. Nomad has been keeping a watching brief on developments and helped facilitate a LocalGovCamp "unconference" in Yorkshire & Humber last summer, to explore some of these issues more widely. Social technologies have interesting potential as enterprise solutions too. Here again, there is a need to share learning and to collaborate across the sector on policy development and on innovative applications.

ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY FOR TECHNOLOGY

Our approach to innovation is generally not as successful as it could be. There are some exciting things happening in local government in Kent and elsewhere and in some areas of health, but too often parts of the public sector assume innovation will prosper with no real support or capacity. There's often a paradox here between ICT services and business units, with ICT able to deliver solutions to meet business needs, once business managers have articulated those to their support services. A simplistic view, to make the point, but one often not that far from actual reality. An innovation hub could help here, by shining light on best

practice and developing wider awareness.

In response, Nomad hopes to establish a successful community for technology enabled change across the public sector and is seeking:

- To champion the promotion and development of programmes and initiatives across the UK in respect of mobile, flexible and new ways of working enabled by technology, providing leadership and motivation
- To become a nationally recognised source of information, advice and guidance on all aspects of mobile, flexible and new ways of working enabled by technology
- To build and maintain a national network of expertise in mobile, flexible and new ways of working with access to associated resources and support
- To provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and learning and support and facilitation to an active online community
- To lobby and seek to influence on behalf of the public sector over the use of new technologies and the further development of new ways of working
- To provide training and advice and bespoke support, drawing upon a network of expert associates where required.

That's very much where we are and how we see the challenge. We remain an unfunded community seeking sponsorship and support. Nomad would value feedback and welcome observation around approach and direction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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