# Public Sector News

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## Superfast Broadband

In the 2010 Spending Review the Government announced £530million for 'superfast broadband' across the UK. 90% of homes and businesses should be able to receive a speed greater than 24Mbps, and everyone should be able to connect with a speed of at least 2Mbps.

Local Authorities have only to the end of February 2012 to apply for a share of the £530 million, but, at a time when they are making cuts to staff and services, they have also been challenged to match any funding they receive.

The Government will invest another £100 million to create up to ten 'super-connected cities' across the UK, with 80-100 megabits per second broadband and city-wide high-speed mobile connectivity. There will be a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and strategic employment zones to support economic growth. Edinburgh, Belfast, Cardiff and London will all receive support from this fund, and a UK-wide competition will decide up to six further cities that will also receive funding.

As well as launching the proposed 'superfast broadband', Defra has launched the Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF), with confirmed funding of £20m. The Fund enables the funding of superfast broadband projects in the most hard-to-reach areas in England, bringing superfast broadband to a greater number of communities than would otherwise be reached.

This will ensure that a greater proportion of businesses and consumers in those communities can take advantage of the benefits of superfast broadband. The expression-of-interest round expired 31 January 2012.

With the benefits of being able to deliver more services online, will we see an even greater shift away from more traditional information re-sources? Do you get in your car, sit in the traffic, hunt for that elusive parking space then fight your way along the busy High Street to get to your local library? Or, do you sit in the comfort of your own home and download that book, stream that film? I know which one I'd prefer.

## More on Open Data

The Government has published a summary of the responses to the consultation *Making Open Data Real. (Making Open Data Real. A Government Summary of Responses* Cabinet Office 2012)

The responses showed widespread support for open data, but differing views on how this might be achieved. There was a consensus that data

should be free of charge but a recognition that this would be an added cost for the public sector. The Information Commissioner was seen as the most appropriate person to manage compliance, but opinions varied as to whether existing legislation could be used or whether new legislation is required.

## Gov.uk

A beta version of the planned single government web domain is now available for testing at www.gov.uk. The site is being billed as a replacement for Directgov.

The new site definitely encourages using the search engine, as this dominates the page and there are very few categories in which to browse.

A useful inclusion on the www.gov.uk site is the ability to 'locate me automatically' when searching for your local authority, and there is no longer any need to enter your post code.

The new design is also a 'responsive design', making it easy to read on a variety of devices such as tablets, laptops, smartphones, desktop computers, TVs, gaming consoles and more. Though at the time of writing this article the responsive design wasn't very responsive.

With over a quarter of adults (27 per cent) and almost half of teenagers (47 per cent) now owning a smartphone, according to Ofcom's latest Communications Market Report any information made available over the internet needs to be delivered with mobiles in mind.

Remember this is a Beta version. Any comments on the test site can be made at http://getsatisfaction.com/govuk/. Registration is required, but this takes less than a minute.

## Connected Histories

Launched in April, **Connected Histories** provides researchers, information professionals and the general public a single point of access to a wide range of digital resources relating to early modern and nineteenth-century British history.

Among the content included are Parliamentary papers, British Newspapers published between 1600 and 1900, British History online and printed Ephemera from the Bodleian library.

## Tell Us Once

Every so often an initiative comes along that makes you think why it never existed before. **Tell Us Once** is one of those.

Led by DWP, it enables those registering a birth or a death with the local registrar to also notify the DVLA, Passport Service and the HM Revenue and Customs on one go.

At present this service is only available over the phone; an online version is planned sometime this year.

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