



about Digital Birmingham

Digital Birmingham was established in 2006 as the driving force to ensure that the benefits of digital and new emerging technologies are available to all people, businesses and sectors in the city.

Having seen Birmingham successfully recognised as one of the world's top 21 intelligent cities, we are driving forward our ambition to make Birmingham a Smart, Connected City. Our programmes of work are focused on developing the city's digital infrastructure and influencing digital investment in services that will be key to accelerating Birmingham and the region's economic opportunities and sustainable growth, as well as promoting greater social inclusion and quality of life.

The Digital Birmingham partnership has grown to over 50 members that include: Virgin, Cisco, Centro, E.ON Energy Solutions Ltd, Coventry University Enterprises, Birmingham City University, Birmingham Science Park (Aston) and Marketing Birmingham. With this diverse board representation we ensure that, as far as possible, every aspect of life and work is represented within the organisation, which provides that important link between the public sector and the commercial sector. The Partnership works to support mutual interest and collaboration and has formed strategic alliances to deliver on initiatives such as the Digital District and the New Library of Birmingham.

Through the Partnership, we are continuing to ensure that the city maintains its digital leadership as well as extend this approach across the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) so that as a region, we stay at the forefront of digital technology and support the drivers for a Smart City that will stimulate innovation led growth, deliver better services and achieve greater transparency and efficiencies.

Digital Birmingham seeks to influence both local and national strategies to drive forward the opportunities presented by digital technologies. We are also dedicated to sharing best practice and developing new initiatives and are a member of the Eurocities Knowledge Society Forum.

Why digital

We are reaching a new state of connectedness in our homes, workplaces and the goods we buy. Advances in technology - ubiquitous access, smart mobility, social media, telepresence, cloud computing and the internet of things are all contributing to a changing society, transforming the way that we work, travel, power our homes and access health care, education and local services.

The Government's paradigm of delivering more for less, budget savings, the Big Society, business transformation, shared services and data transparency can only be delivered through sustained use of digital technologies.

These digital networks will not just transform public services but they will provide the basis for the new industries - media, bio health, design, business services, advanced manufacturing, clean energy and will be a key driver of our knowledge economy, economic renewal, sustainable growth and future well being.

We need to ensure that Birmingham continues to thrive and develop the right skills, infrastructure and channels that will empower people to self serve, encourage social innovation and build prosperous and connected communities to create smart sustainable growth.

Our key priorities

Employment and Education and Skills – The Connected City

Digital Birmingham is establishing investment in the city's digital infrastructure, which is essential to the development of a knowledge based economy and will underpin Birmingham's ambition to be a Smart Connected City. Two key developments are underway to support economic growth and the emerging Enterprise Zones, creating new jobs and inward investment that will enhance productivity, spark innovation led growth and global competitiveness.

- The Digital Districts programme will transform areas of the city (initially Digbeth, Jewellery Quarter and Eastside) into one of the most dynamic and innovative regions in the world establishing high quality vibrant and flexible business and residential communities suited for working, learning and living. The areas will demonstrate the benefits of ultrafast broadband and act as a catalyst to bring together partners to capitalise on the synergies of infrastructure developments.
- The Fourth Generation (4G) high speed wireless network project will establish 4G mobile connectivity across the city supporting flexible and agile working and learning, as well as facilitating the development of new products, applications and services and meet the growing demand for online data access.

These digital networks will not just support economic growth and foster the development of high growth industries and clusters, but they will also develop the talent and skills of businesses, stimulate entrepreneurship and provide the potential to transform public services supporting social inclusion and allowing, for example healthcare and monitoring to be done remotely.

Energy and Sustainability

Cities are responsible for 75% of global energy usage and 80% of all greenhouse gases and as such future economic development will need to be increasingly energy aware and sustainable. Digital Birmingham has been supporting the city's carbon reduction agenda and its commitment to the Green Digital Charter. Our focus is to harness the opportunities of new technologies and to support the delivery of the city climate change and low carbon aims, encourage the development of innovative green products and services and facilitate behaviour change around energy usage by citizens, communities and businesses.

- The European funded Smart Metering project and 'viral' information approaches to domestic energy usage has supported the creation of Birmingham's eco-villages and demonstrated the opportunities from implementing monitoring services to incentivise behavioural change.

- We are exploring the development of Smart Grid opportunities that will generate local energy and control, support energy supply security, reliability and efficiency, encourage community interaction and utilise smart technologies to optimise performance and use of local energy supply. This will be key to reinforcing the Birmingham Declaration to deliver ten green villages by 2015 and ultimately develop 'smart energy communities'.

Protecting Vulnerable People

Digital Birmingham has an impressive track record on digital inclusion projects that have delivered both social and economic benefits to households supporting the council's Customer First programme and agenda of self service. This has included projects such as:

- The award winning Aston Pride 'Computers in the Home' initiative, which has provided technology and connectivity to enable 2500 homes to get online.
- 'Keeping IT in the Family' – an intergenerational toolkit to help children teach older people how to use computers and modern day technologies for everyday tasks.
- Birmingham's Looking Local channel, which allows citizens to interact with the City Council using their digital TV (as well as through pc, Wii, online, mobile phone and iPhone app) and as one of the most visited Local Government channels in the country, is seen as a key tool in addressing the digital divide and channel shift.
- Nesta funded development of a 'Birmingham Civic Dashboard' is a great example of enabling residents to interact with live council data and get involved with finding relevant solutions to address them.

Our continued focus is to engage citizens and communities in using digital technologies to enhance their lives and to better support vulnerable people by contributing to mainstream service design such as housing, health and care. We are championing the opportunities of open data and social media that will promote digital inclusion, encourage social innovation and greater participation. We are exploring innovative technology solutions that will support independent living and other care and carer services; developing skills in the use of technology for home care coupled to employment opportunities and working with other strategic partners to achieve an integrated approach.

City Profile and Influencing

Birmingham has been placed on the national and international stage as a digital city through a range of promotional activities. As excellence of communications is a key factor for business location and creative / digital companies represent a major opportunity for growth, a key strand of our activity is centred on showcasing the city as a digital place with the required infrastructure and skills for growth and as a smart city to exploit the opportunities for innovation and technology.

