

A personal reflection: Chris Price, Director of Digital Developments

As this is my last Headline contribution, I trust you will allow me to list my retirement as one of the highlights of May. I have had a fascinating time leading the partnership since its inception as Broadband Brum over 5 years ago. I think what the team and you, our supporters, have created is a testament to what goodwill and common purpose can achieve without big budgets and teams. I hope you can take time to glance back at these highlight reports to see the breadth of what's been done. I can see the partnership growing given the impact of digital on the economy, the environment and engagement.

PROJECT UPDATE

Bringing connectivity into Tower Blocks

We are working with selected Neighbourhood Managers to increase the level of engagement and participation in their local areas through the provision of broadband connectivity and recycled PCs into Bloomsbury and Nechells social housing tower blocks. This follows on from the successful pilot at Windsor House which was visited by [Digital Inclusion Champion, Martha Lane Fox](#) back in March.

Webex pilot starts June

Digital Birmingham are about to start a pilot with staff to assess the benefits of Cisco's Webex Meeting and Training Center products, a web browser based software that offers a powerful alternative to face to face meetings. Facilities include integrated audio conferencing, business video, instant messaging and web content sharing that have the

potential to revolutionise how staff communicate over a large geographical area.

ACTIVITY UPDATE

Smart Cards

The issue of Smart Cards has arisen again. Enabling a multi-service smart card was one of our original aims but had been put on the shelf when it was unable to become part of the City Council's Customer Service project. Interest has increased again – Centro's implementation on buses continues, the National Smart Card Forum held its annual meeting in the city and there is new interest in cards for citizen reward. If any of you have other examples of where a smart card might be used in the city please email: digital@birmingham.gov.uk.

Freight Management and SocialCar

Two Framework Programme Seven proposals have been submitted. Smart URban Freight (SURF) builds on the intelligent Cities platform and will aim to better route freight deliveries at peak times to the 'last mile' and includes piloting a live demonstrator in Birmingham. The SocialCar proposal is an innovative approach to carpooling for urban areas integrating real time traffic management systems with new web technologies that exploit social networks.

DC10plus comes to a close

The Digital Challenge programme is finally coming to an end. Digital Birmingham has delivered a number of successful projects and activities over the last 3 years, funded by DCLG. The overall grant funding received was £295K which was split in £100k for local work and £195k for delivering the national 'Communities Building Capacities'

work stream that generated local community projects in Bristol, Birmingham, Ealing, Norfolk and Shropshire. A final event is scheduled to take place in October in London.

Home Access Grants Scheme

[Home Access](#) is a government drive that helps children from low income families who currently lack access to a computer and/or internet to get online at home. Over 7800 grants have been approved in Birmingham and we continue to raise awareness through ongoing presentations in schools.

Smart Cities Bid

We are part of a European 'Smart Cities' bid led by Venice City which proposes to establish a web service platform for tourism and culture services (information and transactions). Marketing Birmingham was involved in the proposal and Birmingham's role will be to implement and run the web services for 12 months and lead on the user engagement and testing side through its Living Lab.

National e-Well Being Awards finalist

The '[Keeping IT in the Family](#)' extended project has been selected as a finalist for the National e-Well Being Awards under the [Race Online 2012](#) category.

FUTURE ACTIVITY

On behalf of the city, the Digital Birmingham Partnership will be bidding for the 2011 [Intelligent Community of the Year award](#) which recognises the role that broadband and ICT play in economic and social development.

Diary dates: [Climate Change Festival](#) (5 – 7 June 2010); [euroLED conference](#) (8 June 2010); [Science Capital: Food, Fuel & Future for a changing world](#) (16 June 2010)