



## PRESS RELEASE/ NESTA PROJECT/ 05.10.10

---

### **DATA TO THE PEOPLE**

#### **Birmingham 'Civic dashboard' to create map of local issues for public access**

Birmingham council tax payers will soon be able to access vast amounts of data from the city council's contact database, giving information on anything from potholes to where most complaints are received about graffiti, for example.

Digital Birmingham, which promotes the benefit of digital technologies for all who live, learn and work in the city, and local digital production company Mudlark have together been awarded a £30,000 grant from the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) as part of its 'Make it Local' project.

This will fund the creation of a Birmingham 'Civic Dashboard' - a web tool that will provide an online 'heat map' of requests raised by local residents, colour coded according to requests, which enables Birmingham people and the council to interact with live data and provides a forum for discussion of issues highlighted by the heat map.

Open Data is seen as a key focus in making local authorities more accountable to their citizens and will be a major feature of this month's Beyond 2010 conference in Birmingham, running at the International Convention Centre on 20-21 October.

The 'civic dashboard' will enable Birmingham people and the council to interact with live data, and opens up previously inaccessible records of public comments and complaints about council services. It is one of four teams across the country to win funding from the NESTA project.

Simon Whitehouse, Digital Birmingham's Implementation Manager, said: "Digital Birmingham is delighted to be developing our Birmingham Civic Dashboard with Mudlark. It will give us the opportunity to explore the practical use of linked data within a local authority, revealing local concerns and issues

being raised through our customer relationship management database; but equally we're looking forward to making use of our open data to create a range of conversations with Birmingham residents."

Philip Colligan, executive director of NESTA's public services lab, says: "Councils hold huge amounts of data that has the potential to transform the way we all relate to public services, if only we could access it.

"Though the 'Make it Local' campaign, we wanted to bring together digital media developers and pioneering local authorities to show exactly what could be achieved. We're delighted with the quality of the applications and really excited about the four winning partnerships."

The Beyond 2010 conference, part of Birmingham's Hello Digital week from 18-22 October, will be addressed by Professor Nigel Shadbolt, the government's transparency & open data advisor. Professor Shadbolt is responsible for setting open data standards across the public sector and co-advising the government on the data.gov.uk initiative. His Beyond 2010 keynote speech will demonstrate how open data can help transform public services, explore the best strategic approaches and outline what future government policy will mean for public delivery.

ENDS (443 words)

**For press enquiries, please contact:** Mary Whitehouse, betterpr, tel: 01527 881965, fax: 01527 881985, email: [mary@betterpr.co.uk](mailto:mary@betterpr.co.uk)

### **Notes to editors**

**Digital Birmingham** is a Birmingham City Council initiative and a strategic partnership of private, voluntary and public organisations throughout the city. It is establishing Birmingham as a leading European digital city to ensure that the benefits of digital technologies are available to all in the city. For more information visit [www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk).

Birmingham's Hello Digital Week runs from 18-22 October 2010 and comprises a number of events celebrating the city's achievements against the best in the world. Hello Digital will open up the debate on the impact and importance of technologies across the broadest cross section of industries; provide a platform to build links and share digital best practice and position Birmingham firmly at the heart of digital innovation. For more information, visit [www.hellodigital.net](http://www.hellodigital.net)

**Hello Digital** has been created to support and celebrate Birmingham's investment in digital technologies as a route to generating economic growth, closing the digital divide and promoting greater social inclusion. An innovative partnership between Birmingham City Council, Digital Birmingham, Say Hello,

Screen WM, Arts Council England West Midlands, Business Link WM and Marketing Birmingham, it will acknowledge Birmingham as a leading digital city, populated by skilled citizens and businesses fully engaged with technology and committed to reinforcing the city's reputation as a centre for investment and business growth as well as a great place to live, learn and work.

**NESTA** is the UK's foremost independent expert on how innovation can solve some of the country's major economic and social challenges. Its work is enabled by an endowment, funded by the National Lottery, and it operates at no cost to the government or taxpayer. NESTA is a world leader in its field and carries out its work through a blend of experimental programmes, analytical research and investment in early-stage companies. [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)

**'Make it Local'** aims to identify how local authorities can maximise their use of open data by working with local digital companies to create innovative services that benefit their community. Applications had to address a specific need identified by local residents, allow users an opportunity to update and augment the data with their own content and use real-time local public data.

The four winning local authorities and their digital partners are:

- London Borough of Barnet in partnership with mySociety.
- London Borough of Sutton in partnership with web developer Adrian Short.
- Kirklees Council in partnership with Thumbprint Co-operative.
- Birmingham City Council in partnership with Mudlark.