

SUPPORT FOR E-INNOVATIONS – APPLICATION FORM

(Submit by e-mail only to: localegov@odpm.gsi.gov.uk)

E-INNOVATION THEME:	
Local authority eBusiness	

CONTACT DETAILS:	
Lead local authority	Brighton & Hove City Council
Name of Project Sponsor	David Panter
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Date Application submitted to ODPM	19 th Dec 2003

Summary of proposal (200 words max)
<p>(Please provide a summary in plain English that explains the purpose of your proposed project and what innovation it offers)</p> <p>Brighton & Hove City Council is a partner in theplacetobe.net, a unique partnership of public, private and community partners which aims to improve the quality of information available to people living and working in Brighton & Hove. The proposal is to use theplacetobe.net to develop an integrated traffic and transport information system for the city, through which people living and working in the city can access live information about traffic movement and public transport on multiple information devices.</p> <p>The initial stage delivers SMS-based services for accessing live bus information, indicating the location of buses and the timing of arrivals at individual bus stops across the City.</p> <p>This information is owned by the local authority and is currently appears on limited numbers of information boards at stops around the City.</p> <p>Having been re-purposed for SMS it will also be possible to deliver the same information for use on other devices.</p> <p>Second stage applications could include customisable feeds syndicated to local web sites, digital TV, palmtops and local corporate intranets. It also creates opportunities to augment and adapt the information using information from other sources, especially through other partners in theplacetobe.net.</p> <p>The project fulfils the goal of having a integrated City-wide traffic information management system, and therefore fits with strategic issues identified by the Local Strategic Partnership, regional and national Government in relation to more effective use of public transport.</p>

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Estimated Cost of proposal	
Please provide the estimated total costs of the project (using table one below) and a breakdown of how this funding will be used (using table two below). The information need not be detailed at this stage.	
Table One - total costs:	
Total Project Cost	£
- Match funding available (list the source(s))	£
- Theplacetobe.net [in kind]	£ 25,000
- Possible revenue through SMS	£ 10,000
= e-Innovations funding sought from ODPM (n.b. £50k min)	£ 200,000
Table Two – Breakdown of costs: (List key items – e.g. project manager, software licences, dissemination costs, etc)	
Project management	£ 35,000
Programming support [contracted in]	£ 135,000
Communications/marketing	£ 30,000
	£
	£
= Total Project Cost	£ 235,000
	Inc matched

Key deliverables of proposal (200 words max)
(Please list the key deliverables for your proposal, e.g. products, routemaps, standards, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live bus information delivered through SMS • SMS interface design standards for local information • RSS and other relevant standards available for local travel and transport information • Version 1.0 of an integrated travel and transport information system for Brighton & Hove • Documentation to encourage further take up of live local traffic information feed

Partners to the proposal (100 words max)
(Please list the partners to the proposal, including whether they are fully signed up, or have merely expressed an interest in taking part, together with their contribution (whether financial or in kind) they will provide)
The key partner in this proposal is theplacetobe.net, an innovative public private partnership initially funded through ODPM/ISB.
theplacetobe.net aims to improve the quality of local information available to people living and working in Brighton & Hove.
Its founding partners are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighton & Hove City Council

- Brighton & Hove City Primary Care Trust
- University of Brighton
- University of Sussex
- Sussex Community Internet Project
- Newsquest Sussex/www.thisisbrightonandhove.co.uk
- Virtual Brighton/www.brighton.co.uk

Matched funding in this bid is provided through in kind time given by partners and specific input as individual applications develop.

Support is also expected from Sussex Police and Brighton & Hove Bus Company.

Main Text of the proposal (2,000 words max)

(Please explain in plain English the aims and objectives of the proposal, including how it meets the criteria set out in the guidance note and the innovation it offers)

Overview

Improved traffic management and travel within Brighton & Hove is a key goal relating to quality of life and economic development, and especially to regional and national targets for greater use of public transport.

Access to accurate and up-to-date information about traffic and travel services is a vital part of encouraging people to use alternatives to private cars and Brighton & Hove City Council has worked closely with other partners to invest in appropriate information systems. The most notable and highly successful of these is a city wide system for showing expected times of arrival at bus stops.

This project is developed in association with theplacetobe.net, a not for profit public, private partnership which is developing applications to improve the quality of information available to local people.

It will build on the existing investment in the bus information system, as well as developing new aggregated traffic and transport information by working closely with other providers, such as Sussex Police, to augment the bus information to meet the needs of people living and working ion the City.

It will develop the role of the Council as a key facilitator of City-wide services and develop the role of theplacetobe.net as a means of building city-wide information projects in partnership with organisations from all sectors.

It will specifically deliver information about traffic and transport services to local people through various channels, which will include bus information through text messages, sharing traffic information through local corporate intranets and creating and promoting customisable feeds of relevant information which can be used in digital TV and other devices.

It will help create new relationships, focused on the gathering and sharing of information and provide a basis for longer term integration of traffic telematics and other information architecture across the City.

Objectives

The project will:

- Provide more widespread access to existing information about bus services
- Integrate existing local traffic and travel information available through different public and private organisations
- Develop and deliver customised applications for the use of this information by specific users through different channels, including SMS, digital TV, web pages, WAP and email.

Expected timetable

April – Sept 04

- Full project definition phase and contracting suppliers

Sept – Dec 04: Project Phase One

- Develop SMS version of existing bus information

Jan – March 05: Phase Two

- Repurpose bus information for customisable delivery through multiple channels

Jan – March 05: Phase Three

- Identify key related local information resources related to travel and transport information

April – June 05: Phase Four

- Building an aggregated information resource which collates available information from different sources

July – Sept 05: Phase Five

- Developing further applications for delivering this augmented information through appropriate channels.

Oct – Dec 05: Phase Six

- Evaluation, documentation and dissemination

Services that will be developed via the project

The council currently works in partnership with Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company to provide real time information at city centre bus stops that tells the public when the next bus is due to arrive. This has been a highly successful initiative and theplacetobe.net sees that the service can be taken one step further.

Phase One of the project will deliver an SMS-enabled version of this system, providing personalised real time bus information via mobile phones. This would include the destination and arrival time [in minutes] of the next three buses at a particular bus stop.

This can be achieved by working with specialist contractors and will include the opportunity to assess the overall 'shareability' of the existing information and the possibility of adapting it to make it more valuable in terms of integration with other services.

Phase Two will build other applications to make use of the same information through other channels. This could include:

- Delivering information to staff intranets of local organisations – especially through existing partners in theplacetobe.net such as the PCT, Universities and/or large local employers. These may be adaptations of the existing service, for example using a web-based management tool to enable American Express to feed live information about bus stops closest to its offices.
- It is also possible to build additional services for users such as the Universities, which are mainly served by one particular bus route;
- Downloadable desktop applications – a live bus information ticker fed through the internet available to all internet users;
- Delivering easily-navigated location-specific information through digital TV;
- Creating RSS [Really Simple Syndication] feeds of all available information for use by local websites, such as brighton.co.uk and thisisbrightonandhove.co.uk.

It is possible that this phase will also include the development of services which use Multimedia Messaging

Services [MMS] and could also look to applications which can be delivered through 3G phones.

Theplacetobe.net is currently building a research process which will provide better understanding of the current usage of information and communications technologies by local people. This will include how people use existing technologies as well as attitudes and preferences for new services. This information will be available to guide decisions and priorities about new applications developed at this stage and in later phases.

Phase Three will provide a focus for developing links between bus information and other relevant local traffic and travel information.

Brighton & Hove City Council has already developed its own systems for collecting and managing information about buses, but other local bodies are now developing systems for collecting other traffic and travel information, especially Sussex Police. This project provides a means of integrating information from these sources, helping to build a broader picture of local travel and transport information.

The starting point will be closer working with the holders of the information, addressing technical issues about how to share live data and undertaking detailed negotiation about access to the information. Theplacetobe.net, as a not-for-profit public-private partnership is ideally placed to negotiate such access to information which may be in public or private hands.

Phase Four of the project will build on the applications developed using bus information and identify ways of integrating information from other sources. This may include the creation of a new information resource, holding aggregated information collected on the fly from different providers. This reflects theplacetobe.net's work on creating a search engine, which will regularly spider local sites and collate index information on a server hosted by the City Council.

It is expected that web spiders and other robots would be required to collect and map information from different sources, creating an integrated body of information that can be interrogated by different information services. Theplacetobe.net is currently building sophisticated spidering tools to enable this to be customised and semi-automated, to reduce costs and the need for human intervention.

In **Phase Five** the project will create new applications to make use of the integrated information service. In some cases this may not be the same applications as the use of the bus information. For example traffic flow information may be useful on the American Express intranet but may not be appropriate to deliver through SMS.

We can expect the type of services developed in Phase Four to reflect the issues arising when creating the integrated transport information, and feedback from existing users of the bus information by whatever channels have been established in Phase Two.

Whatever is specifically developed the goal will be to deliver integrated information about traffic and travel around the city in ways which can be personalised and customised and delivered through multiple channels.

Beyond Phase Five the project will undertake a full **Review and Evaluation Phase** to reflect on lessons learned and enable the creation of full documentation and a clear routemap to help further develop an integrated traffic information/telematics service in Brighton & Hove.

Key outcomes

The primary work of the project is to deliver information about public transport to people who live and work in Brighton and Hove. The exact nature of this information and how it is delivered will grow as the project moves through its phases, but the overall outcome will be that better quality information is more readily available in ways which meet an individual's needs.

A key outcome for Brighton & Hove City Council is that the project will create a direct and practical means of engaging with providers of related information, as well the technical capability and expertise to deliver that information through different channels.

It makes use of existing investments in technology infrastructure and builds on the commitment of the partners to the successful development of theplacetobe.net.

A key outcome of this project will be to continue to realise and build upon these investments and commitments and to further develop what have been highly successful projects in their own right.

The project will help build stronger relationships between key local information providers, for the benefit of local people. This includes a recognition that because people want information about services to be more 'joined up' information providers face technical and organisational obstacles in delivering their information.

A key outcome of the project is that those organisations which can offer information about local travel and transport will be able to jointly develop services which reflect the needs of users, as well as building technical solutions to make their own information more shareable. This includes

- a means of connecting and feeding relevant information to and from key local public, private and community information services;
- developing standards for holding and sharing information, including xml, RSS and other emerging standards.

Looking further ahead this project can also help identify key issues around the information architecture of the city. This could encompass further projects relating to traffic telematics, but may also be the basis for more ambitious joint working on new standards which may radically alter the technical environment within information is shared, especially IPv6 (Internet Protocol Version 6).

Marketing & Advertising Strategy

Outline budgets have been included for communications activity to support delivery of key services, especially all public facing services, such as the bus information via SMS. These will need detailed consideration during a full business planning process.

One promotional issue which could be critical is whether to subsidise the pilot phase of any SMS-based service, to make the service as cheap to use as possible. This has an impact on possible matched funding [discussed below] and will be examined in full during a business planning process.

The partners in theplacetobe.net also provide a range of opportunities for promoting individual services, whether through the local newspaper or through staff newsletters.

The Bus Company is also expected to support the promotion of the service, through its own bus-based promotional services.

Matched funding

Partners in theplacetobe.net already provide in-kind support through their time and expertise on the Board and the Executive Committee. Individual partners have also offered specialist help with particular issues, such as promotional opportunities or research expertise and access to other funding. We expect this project to benefit from their support in the same way.

There is an additional opportunity for generating income through SMS services. These cannot currently be delivered free of charge to users [ie there is no equivalent to 0800 numbers for text messaging] so users are used to be charged for services through their phones. Although this may change it presents an opportunity to include small additional charge for each message delivered, which can provide some additional funding as the services are rolled out. A full business planning process is needed to assess the potential value of this opportunity.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Brighton & Hove City Council and theplacetobe.net would commit to project monitoring and information share as required. Detailed monitoring would be developed through the set-up stage and will be considered fully when preparing the PID.

The monitoring and evaluation data will link to the key objectives and will chiefly be enabled via the IT system. The statistics gathered about the use of SMS-based systems could include type of information requested, popularity of a particular bus route, usage of individual mediums. The service would also be evaluated by assessing the extent to which it reduces telephone operator based services and increases the strategies of public transportation.

Theplacetobe.net already has various methods of disseminating the findings to partners, including regular meetings and direct contact with key people in partner organisations. It is also developing plans for a regular information providers forum, to act as a public forum for people interested in local information provision.

The City Council and theplacetobe.net website [at www.scip.org.uk/p2b] will host relevant information about lessons learned.

Dissemination, Shared Learning and Take Up (200 words max)

(Please explain how the deliverables for your proposal will be rolled out and taken up by other authorities and organisations and, in particular, how the project will build capacity within your own authority)

The lessons learned in this project will include:

- technical issues relating to the use of existing data through new channels;
- the design of appropriate SMS interfaces for this type of information service;
- possible need to develop specialist querying software to understand the request for information;
- developing semi-automated and customisable solutions for offering information to other web-based services;
- revenue opportunities of delivering text-based services in this way;
- the need for semi-automated spiders and other tools to help gather and aggregate information for specialist services;
- the ongoing value of developing a public private partnership as a focus for City-wide projects of this type.

Theplacetobe.net uses open source solutions wherever possible, and adopts an open approach to documenting its work in ways which helps others benefit from the lessons learned.