



# Making digital a government priority

Why the next UK government should make digital a key focus area.

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This year's General Election is already proving to be one of the most exciting and unpredictable in recent times, with all the main political parties doing everything in their power to offer voters a realistic vision of the future that is full of opportunities.

It's no easy task, by any stretch of the imagination. The last election was, of course, full of twists and turns, resulting in the unlikely formation of a Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition. Five years on, the country is still undivided with regards to how successful their tenure in government has been.

If there's anything that unites the parties, then it's the need to effectively cut government spending and lessen the severity of public sector cuts. In short, being money wise while boosting GDP.

One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through transforming government, centrally and locally, to a digital way of working. In the information age, characterised by the predominance of the internet in our personal lives, it is imperative that the next UK government makes this a priority.

We take a look at the three key things policymakers in all departments, at all levels, should bear in mind from 2015 onwards.

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## The evolving digital environment

Paper, processes and old ways of working – all of these cost time and money, which could be put to better use. Old habits die hard though, and form filling, face-to-face meetings and document-driven procedures endure.

Over the last decade though, the digital revolution has really taken hold and now offers a far better reality, whereby money isn't squandered needlessly and services are improved to everyone's benefit.

For example, real and lasting change can be made through the total digitisation of paper in any given department, meaning that information is centralised, secure and easy to access.

Civil servants benefit from a more productive environment, while those accessing government services experience a much more streamlined and efficient service. This is all made possible through a modern way of working. This is the future; embrace it today.

Scarborough Borough annual  
**saving of  
£185,000**  
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## The power to cut costs creatively

Local government accounts for a quarter of all public spending, a fact that council leaders across the country are all too aware given that they are charged with enacting some exacting cuts.

Yet, with a bit of creative thinking, this can be achieved with minimal damage to any given local authorities ability to deliver services to their respective constituents. For example, did you know that Scarborough Borough has saved £185,000 a year through the replacement of expensive printers with cheaper, multifunctional alternatives?

And the savings can go into the billions. The NHS is currently in the midst of a total digital upgrade, which PricewaterhouseCooper estimated back in 2013 could see the national health service £4.4 billion better off by 2018.

The efficiency gains to be had are sizeable and additionally, with technology, more achievable. The City of Copenhagen, which has embarked on a major shift to an online base of operations, estimates that digital transactions will be five per cent cheaper than current face-to-face solutions.

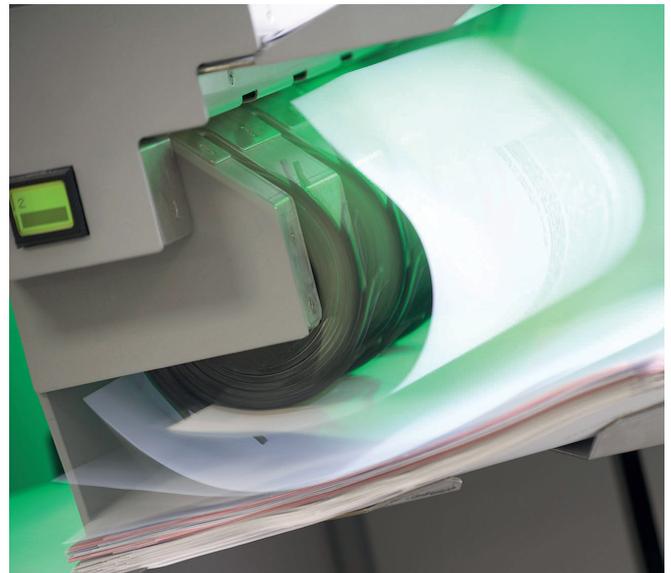
## The high expectations of today

Everything is easier with technology. From shopping to banking to keeping in touch with friends and family members and learning what's happening in the world, it's all possible from a handheld device otherwise known as a smartphone.

Culturally, the move to digital has been outside of public services, yet, change is in the air. Now that this is becoming increasingly the norm – consider the massive rise of m-commerce as an example – people are keen to experience a digital-first across the board. Public services are no different to this.

Change is already afoot, with the DVLA abolishing the need for car owners to display a paper tax disc on the front window of their car. As a document on the matter states, "the abolition will provide administrative cost savings to the taxpayer and business, and removal of an administrative inconvenience to motorists."

More and more, people are going to want to see and experience public services that are digitally-first. Paper is always going to be an option, an alternative to fall back on, but in the foreseeable future, everything is going to be achievable via the web.



## A digital government is an effective government

Whatever the outcome of the General Election in May, the future incumbents have a lot of expectation riding on them to make the next five years more upbeat, inclusive and life-changing than the previous five. Putting digital at the heart of what all decision makers do at every level of government is going to be instrumental. Technology can deliver exceptional results.