

BSA 'Smart Places of the Future' Event

As part of a series of events with local government leaders, in January 2019 the BSA held a discussion on Smart Places of the Future, in conjunction with international law firm and BSA member Clyde & Co LLP. Some 60 local authority, VCSE and private sector representatives gathered for the discussion in Clyde & Co's London offices.

With thanks to host and facilitator David Hansom of Clyde & Co, keynote speaker Mark Prisk MP, and our panel of speakers - Philip Craig, Director of Strategy, UK Government at Sopra Steria; Matt Fitzpatrick, Sales Director at Bouygues E&S; Jen Hawes-Hewitt, Global Cities Lead at Accenture; Miranda Marcus, Programme Manager for R&D at the Open Data Institute; Llewelyn Morgan, Head of Innovation, IHub at Oxfordshire County Council; and Linda O'Halloran, Head of Local Digital Collaboration Unit at MHCLG.

The issue of Smart Places is a hot topic across the public sector in the UK. Several common themes emerged in this discussion - reiterated by public and private sector speakers alike.

These included:

- the fact there is no 'one size fits all' solution for different regions. Local needs are paramount;
- the need to put people and communities, and their needs and wishes, at the heart of the Smart Places agenda, giving people the timely information they need to take decisions to improve their quality of life and putting them in charge;
- the far-reaching implications for data use;
- the systems and attitudes required to enable communities to learn from good practice elsewhere; and
- the need to break down silos - whether in the public or private sector.

Mark Prisk MP, the former Housing Minister and former Chair of the former All Party Parliamentary Group on Smart Cities, kicked the morning off with a strategic overview of the Smart Places agenda.

The agenda was ultimately about people and their quality of life. Communities currently faced significant demographic, social, financial and political challenges, and thinking Smarter was a way communities could tackle these challenges.

Mark set out several practical examples of areas where this could be put into practice, the first being transport - including everything from contact payment systems, to sensors to improve maintenance costs, and ways in which technology changes allowed people to travel differently.



The distinction between public and private was breaking down, and the Transport Select Committee had highlighted just how much could be achieved if data were integrated for all modes of travel.

Other practical applications of the Smart Places agenda included energy; and health and social care.

Government needed to lead the way in terms of standards, performance benchmarks and regulatory frameworks, but councils too had a central role in breaking down silos, changing cultures, and co-operating together. The public sector needed to incorporate the Smart agenda fully into procurement decisions, for example to take forward BIM. There was a real opportunity for the UK to develop - and export - Smart innovation.

There were also implications for politics itself of these changing dynamics. People wanted to engage and take decisions in new ways - including in the use of their own data, and in also taking informed decisions which affected their communities. If the Smart agenda were shown to help them do so, people would embrace it. There needed to be a networked, collaborative approach.

There followed debate on how best to take this new way of thinking forward, especially in a world of devolution. If central standards were outcome-based, they wouldn't over-specify in ways which robbed places of decision-making power. Some thought that the technology in many cases was more advanced than the legal, political and moral frameworks needed to support its use. If people saw the benefits, they would help pull through the change.

Miranda Marcus from the Open Data Institute was the first panel speaker. Miranda set out the diverse landscape of data arrangements and the ways in which data was used. There was a Data Spectrum of closed, shared and open data. The ODI worked with companies and governments to build an open, trustworthy data ecosystem. The aim was for people, organisations and communities to use data to make better decisions and be protected from any harmful impacts.



Miranda set out the features of a world in which there was better access to public services, more efficient service delivery chains, and more informed policy development, and the implications of each for data use.

There were several important lessons. The ethical use of data was central. A data-fearing world resulted from a lack of trust. Data should be seen as an infrastructure, not a commodity - which led to data hoarding.

Miranda set out the characteristics of an open data ecosystem, in which value, knowledge and insight - not just data - flowed. Transport for London was an example of a two-way data ecosystem which responded to very specific user need. There were several clear building blocks for such a system.

Matt Fitzpatrick from Bouygues E&S focused on the application of Smart Places principles to what he described as the biggest challenge currently being faced: pollution.

Networked Smart Street Lighting provided a particular response to that challenge, and a Smart Places platform could also enable a wider range of features to be developed - from synchronised traffic lights to cut emergency response times, to provision of crime data, to electric vehicle charging.



The Internet of Things could add genuine value to Places in a range of areas, including vehicles communicating with each other, and pollen count alerts for asthma sufferers.

Matt set out the UK's Energy Trilemma: security of supply; affordable energy; and the need to decarbonise the grid. The Electric Vehicle challenge meant Places had to rethink the way they looked at energy. Decentralisation was one way forward. This would also help bring what were currently siloed datasets together.

As a case study, Matt outlined the work of the Bouygues Living Lab in pioneering new solutions.

Llewelyn Morgan, Head of Innovation at Oxfordshire County Council, was the final speaker in this first panel session.

He outlined the journey the Council had been on in this area, working with the universities and the City Council in developing a Living Lab - starting with transport. He set out examples of innovation in practice, in particular through LIDAR imaging.



Opportunities were being explored to make better use of google data. Innovation was also being piloted in health and care through the COACH and COACH 2 pilots.

Llewelyn had been asked to talk about public-private partnership working, and emphasised the importance of getting procurement right. The Council had started an Innovation Partnership procurement in October 2018, which allowed for an R&D round, conducted by the private sector and funded by the Council, to determine a direct procurement route.

There were several important lessons from the Oxfordshire experience, including the importance of collaboration; outcome-based commissioning; breaking down silos; putting people in control of data; and genuine innovation.

The presentations led to spirited discussion - covering everything from measuring value in open data, to the balance between innovation and risk, and on to the mechanics of sharing and opening data while ensuring security of data. If the focus moved from energy and commodities to people-centred data around social care and the like, sensitivities on the latter would increase. However the local government challenge of controlling cost while raising revenue meant energy would remain in the spotlight.

The key, it was agreed, was good data - not just more data.



After a short break, Sopra Steria Strategy Director **Philip Craig** opened the second panel session with a focus on the challenges facing towns and cities. Digital, devolution and data were all disrupting the status quo; each could provide possible solutions to shared challenges. The application of Smart techniques had started with transport, but had extended to utilities, health and social care, and security. In each case this could improve some key quality of life indicators.

Philip drew on Sopra Steria's international experience to demonstrate the different ways in which cities were taking this agenda forward. Some were seeking to develop commercial opportunities by monetising data sets or incubating solutions with the hope of spinning them off to create long-term revenue streams.

Others were focusing on managing demand, for example using data parking bay prices to distribute cars more evenly. Policymakers were looking to use data to nudge behaviour in transport in particular.

Philip set out several lessons learnt by colleagues working in different jurisdictions - including ways to deal with customer concerns and supplier concerns. He emphasised the need for incremental change but with a clear long-term outcome- and citizen-focused agenda.

Linda O'Halloran, Head of the MHCLG's Digital Collaboration Unit, closed the session with a presentation on driving local collaboration from the centre.

Linda outlined the journey her Unit had been on, and its approach to helping local areas get the basics right - #FixThePlumbing - to enable local solutions. The principle was 'convene, not control'.



Linda set out the Local Digital Declaration, which had attracted 145 signatories.

The Unit had four goals: to help all relevant people understand why and how to implement the Declaration; to get councils and suppliers to reuse open standard tools to drive interoperability; to establish wiki methodologies and cultures for 'wiki-fixing the plumbing'; and to develop an emerging common language for reuse.

Linda explained the progress made on the Local Digital Fund - and the next steps.

The Unit was working with LocalGovDigital on Pipeline, a service to aid innovation and collaboration.

Discussion following these presentations focused on how central and local government and their partners could scale and replicate innovation and good practice. The key was having an innovation pathway - a clear vision to plan to scale. That led to innovation and investment.

The day concluded on the thought that getting procurement right was a key part of this.

Linda O'Halloran circulated information on how local authorities and others can keep in touch with the work of the Unit.

Meanwhile the BSA and Clyde & Co are looking to carry forward this discussion elsewhere in the UK.

Any local authority or private or VCSE organisation interested in receiving more information on either of these areas of work should contact BSA@BSA-org.com.

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