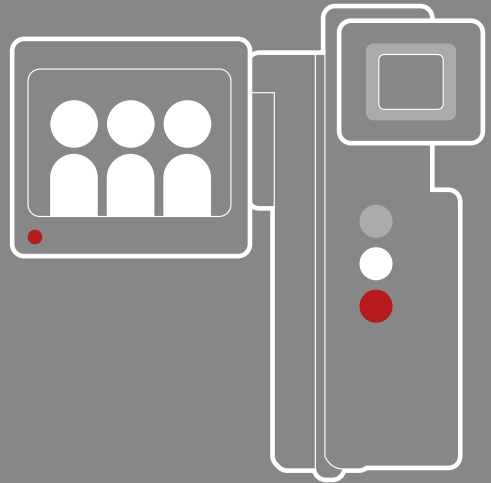
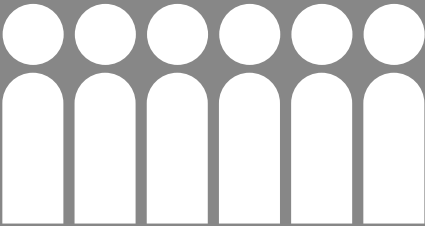


Highlights of the

# Local Government Webcasting Report

## Do we, could we, should we?

Understanding Webcasting in the context of local government service delivery and communication activity






## To request further reports

### The full webcasting report resulted in two further reports:

1. A summary report for Communications Directors that tackles the question of where new technology sits in the traditional marketing mix
2. A summary report for IT Directors that provides key technical information on broadcasting and receiving webcasts

### To request a copy of the full report or the summary reports please either:

-  **Complete and return the enclosed Freepost postcard**
-  **Complete the online form found at :**  
**<http://www.idea.gov.uk/publications/webcasting>**
-  **Telephone the Helpdesk at IDeA on **020 7296 6880****

## Introduction

This document presents highlights of a report on Webcasting in local government. The full report, which is available upon request, is based on a highly representative survey and a series of interviews carried out with local government staff in November and December 2003, and includes special consideration of the views of IT and marketing/communications managers.

We also carried out an automated assessment of computer hardware and software making this report the first, we believe, to give a clear picture of local government infrastructure from the employee's point of view.

### The report covers the following topics:

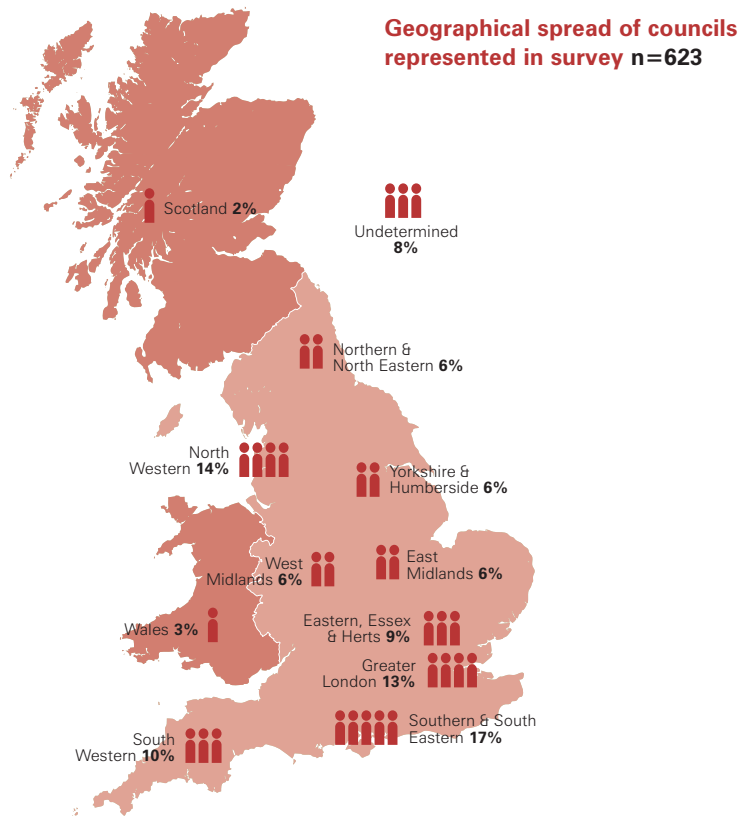
- The personal experience of Webcasting of local government staff
- Their experiences at work
- Their attitudes towards webcasts
- The ideal content of webcasts
- The practicalities of receiving and broadcasting webcasts in local government infrastructure

*'The participants were overwhelmingly positive about the potential of webcasting with nearly three-quarters saying it would be of great benefit or of some benefit to them in their work.'*

# Research design and methodology

## The survey respondents

Survey respondents were broadly distributed geographically throughout Britain, with the exception of Northern Ireland. In the map below, the symbol for one person represents approximately 3% of the survey responses.



## The survey

An online survey was completed by 623 local government employees registered at the IDeA's Knowledge website<sup>1</sup> (a response rate of 14.7%) Survey results are accurate to  $\pm 3.5\%$  at a 95% confidence interval.

### In England, the survey represents:

- 100% of Metropolitan Authorities (or 36 of 36)
- 85% of London Boroughs (or 28 of 33)
- 81% of Shire Unitary Authorities (or 38 of 41)
- 94% of County Councils (or 32 of 34)
- 47% of District Councils (or 111 of 238)

### Outside England, the survey represents:

- 50% of Welsh Unitary Authorities (or 11 of 22)
- 41% of Scottish Unitary Authorities (or 13 of 32)
- 0% of Northern Irish District Councils (or 0 of 26)

## The interviews

The qualitative element of the research consisted of one group interview of nine IT Managers and Communications Managers working in local government, and five individual interviews conducted over the telephone, also with IT Managers and Communications Managers.

## The automated assessment

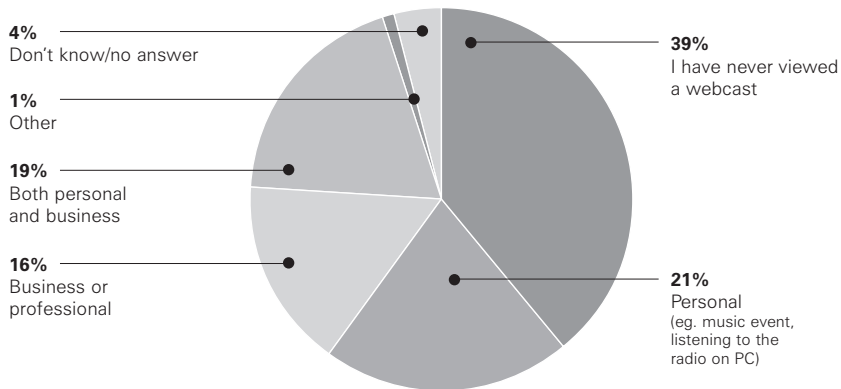
The final element of the survey was an automatic observation of the technical characteristics of the participants' computers and web browsers.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge/>

## Experience of Webcasting

- Most survey respondents (56%) had watched a webcast, and slightly more than one-quarter (27%) had watched a video webcast at work.
- Webcasting is still viewed as 'experimental' or 'pioneering' with only 15% of participants saying that it had been used in their organisation. Interview participants were unsure whether it would become 'dated' like other previously popular technologies (e.g. WAP).

Please tell us about the type of webcasts you have viewed n=623



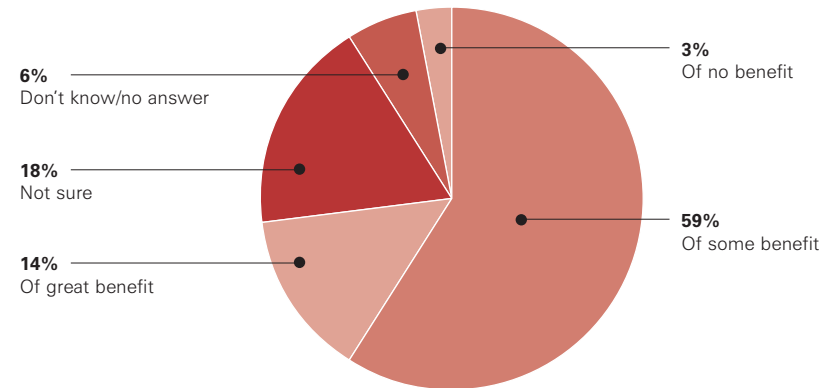
1 '16,000 people trying to get onto the network at once to see your chief exec would be a disaster.'

2 'It'd be a miracle as well'

## Attitudes towards Webcasting

- Local government staff had an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards webcasts, with 73% saying it would be of great benefit (14%) or some benefit (59%) to them in their work.
- Survey participants believed that the key benefits of webcasting were saving money, saving time, reaching a wider audience and replaying events. Over 50% ranked these benefits as very important indeed or somewhat important.
- More than 60% of marketing/communications managers surveyed could think of at least one instance where they could have achieved their communications objectives through webcasting.

Would webcasting be of benefit to you in your work? n=623



## Webcast content

- Webcasting council meetings was by far the most frequently mentioned use of webcasts in our interviews. Participants said that it most frequently had political and executive backing, that it was being marketed by webcast firms, and that it connected to the modernisation and e-democracy initiatives.
- But interview participants did not believe that broadcasting the business of local democracy was really the best use of webcasting. They highlighted a range of other issues as more worthy of consideration: for example, training, communication between management and staff, and the delivery of internal information. All these issues were ranked more highly by group interview participants than webcasting council deliberations.

*'At one of the council meetings that Lancashire County Council had, on some fairly contentious issue...8,419 people watched a live webcast and the council leader commented at the time that "It was more than the size for the local football team that we get on a Saturday afternoon."'*

- Interview participants felt that too little work had been done on cost-benefit analysis of webcasts.

### Technology in the communications mix

Many participants stressed that a mix of technology to communicate was the best strategy, suggesting that understanding the place of webcasting within the communication mix is a key factor in successful webcasting<sup>2</sup>.

#### Benefits of webcasting, generated by group interview participants

- PR value
- Councillors can see themselves
- Makes authorities more accessible
- Reduces the impact of distance
- Meets the expectations from the public (esp. younger generation)
- Drives use of broadband
- Improves communications
- Reduces costs
- Modernisation
- Spread familiarity with technology
- Lifelong learning
- Interactivity/public participation
- Accessibility
- Consistency of delivery
- Social inclusion
- Working from home

*'One of the key benefits must be making things more accessible. One of the key drivers for modernisation is to make policy accessible...'*

<sup>2</sup> To obtain a summary report on where new technology sits in the marketing communications mix please refer to the inside cover of this booklet

## Receiving webcasts in the local government infrastructure

- Despite the concerns of IT managers, an automated assessment of survey participants' hardware and software shows that **between 74% and 90% of local government employees should be able to receive video webcasts today**. Key determinants are: a broadband connection, a media player enabling them to view video, and a sound card enabling them to hear the audio or video.
- Nearly all the participants in our survey (over 95%) had broadband connections; over 90% had either Windows Media Player or Real Media Player installed.

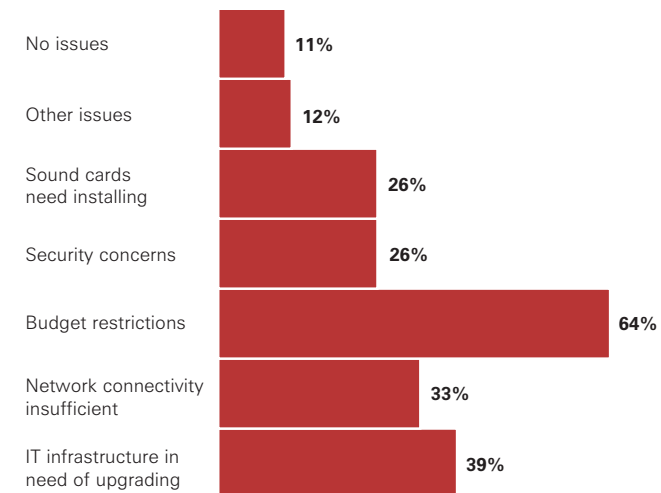
*1 'It's a couple of days of someone reconfiguring our existing network and the equipment itself can cope with it. It just hasn't been told to cope with it.'*

*2 'If that's the case then it's just knowledge sharing, because at the moment, along with cost, that's the most significant barrier we face. If we use it we want to use it significantly for internal communications but the fear is – and our network haven't yet come back and told us that we're wrong – that we couldn't do it properly without...'*

## Broadcasting webcasts in the local government infrastructure

- Over two-thirds of IT managers did not know whether their IP network was multicast enabled<sup>3</sup> (key to sending multiple simultaneous streams).
- Most have proxy servers, but may not have a streaming cache enabled (again key to keeping expensive bandwidth usage down).

**What issues would your organisation face in enabling webcasting technology to be used? base=IT managers n=66**



<sup>3</sup> To obtain a summary report on the technical issues relating to broadcasting and receiving webcasts please refer to the inside cover of this booklet

# Contact Information

For further information about the reports,  
please contact the IDeA or Xpedita.

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