Welcome to the February edition of Local Connects, Local Directgov’s newsletter.

In this month’s newsletter:

Really Useful event: ‘Social media for local councils’, March 22, North Yorks

Our next Really Useful (RU) Day is on 22nd March in Northallerton, North Yorkshire.

It’s the last RU day on the theme of social media, and a chance to learn how other councils use social media and work on improving the way you use it.

The event is free and will be a mixture of presentations, practical sessions (we’ll be getting you to work on an emergency flooding scenario) and opportunities to network with other local authorities.

We’ve got some great speakers lined up: Louise Kidney will be joining us from the Government Digital Service (GDS) and Kirklees Council will pair up with Thumbprint Co-operative to talk about engaging with local communities using social media.

You can find all the details on the [event webpage](http://reallyusefulday7.eventbrite.co.uk/" \t "_blank).

To register, email us: [localdirectgov@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:localdirectgov@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

LocalGov Digital takes on practitioner role

Leading digital practitioners from across local government have formed a new network – LocalGov Digital – to take ownership of challenges facing the sector and to present innovative solutions.

LocalGov Digital will also be part of a new ‘Digital Alliance’ which will be launched at a joint LGA/DCLG Digital Summit on 4 March. The alliance will bring together representative groups from across the sector – Local Government Delivery Council, Local CIO Council, Local Contact Council – to drive forward service transformation and embrace digital delivery.

Membership of the network is open to all and guided by a small steering group at the centre which is supported by the LGA.

Carl Haggerty from Devon County Council and Chair of the Steering Group said: “Throughout local government there is a need to adapt to new challenges and opportunities presented by the ‘digital by design and open by default’ agenda.

“If we fail to act we may miss our chance to manage transformation ourselves and to fully exploit efficiencies inherent in new ways of working. Localgov Digital is our way of talking about these issues, building on the existing work across the sector and beyond, and to enable everyone to share common approaches and techniques.”

Sarah Jennings, Head of Digital Communications & Knowledge at the LGA, said: “We were approached by LocalGov Digital for support in organising a network of skilled digital practitioners, passionate about transforming their own organisations and working with others.

“Although independent from the LGA, we have formally recognised LocalGov Digital as having a key role to play within the new ‘Digital Alliance’ and we hope that others will now join the network and share their experience.”

To find out more about LocalGov Digital follow them on Twitter: [@LocalGovDigital](http://twitter.com/#!/@LocalGovDigital), #LocalGovDigital.

Also, launching soon: a website and public Knowledge Hub group.

Government Digital Service (GDS) priorities 2013/2014

We thought you would be interested in GDS’s priority for the coming year:

* 30 April 2013: all departmental corporate sites to be on GOV.UK
* 12 June 2013: search experience significantly improved
* 17 October 2013: GOV.UK “wholesale” – open access to content and structured data
* End 2013/Q1 2014: HMRC mainstream transition complete. Also, mainstream migration complete for all departments.

Visit the website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk/).

Information management and records retention meeting, March 14, 2013

The LGA is hosting the next Information Management Working Group meeting on Thursday 14th March 2013.  The meeting will examine changes to the lists that index GOV.UK’s links to council web pages and are used by councils in websites and information management systems.

The second half of the meeting, in the afternoon, will be used to kick off the Records Retention Project, which aims to develop generic guidance for councils on records storage and destruction. Check out the [website](http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/News/NewsDetail.aspx?Item=752" \t "_blank) for more details.

Esd-toolkit small area charting and mapping tool pre-release

A pre-release version of esd-toolkit’s small area charting and mapping tools has been opened up to all local authorities at <http://alpha.reports.esd.org.uk/>.  The tools give you a better understanding of the make-up of your council’s area.  They show metrics drawn from a variety of public sources, including recently released 2011 census data.

Sprint 13 – a showcase of the best digital work in government, now available online

In January, GDS hosted Sprint 13, a one-day event that showcased the best of digital across government.

The event aimed to:

* Find out how other parts of Government are delivering on their digital ambition
* Find practical answers to the questions that we all face in delivering the Government’s Digital Strategy
* Teach delegates about non-Government examples of digital transformation from GDS digital advisors and board members from major brands such as M&S, Lloyds, BA and Amazon

Delegates also got the chance to listen to major speakers set out the digital future for Government, with keynote speeches from:

* Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office
* Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion
* Stephen Kelly, UK Government COO

Watch the video footage and download the workshop materials on the [Sprint 13 website](http://digital.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/2013/02/05/action-from-sprint13/" \t "_blank).

That’s all for this month. Don’t forget, we’re also on Twitter. Follow us!

* [@localdirectgov](http://twitter.com/#!/@localdirectgov)
* [@info4local](http://twitter.com/#!/@info4local)
* [@communitiesUK](http://twitter.com/#!/@communitiesUK)