

Better for Less

Chapter 18

37 min read

All change please

In early 2009, I met Liam Maxwell. That name might not mean much to you unless you work in Government but he has been an influential figure in government technology throughout the world, a strong advocate of mapping and a good friend since that first encounter. We met when I was speaking at some random conference in London on evolution and technology. By happenstance Liam was in the audience. We got chatting and discovered we had common interests and ways of thinking about technology. I was soon invited to the “Triple Helix” group which consisted of a motley crew of interesting people — Jerry Fishenden, Mark Thompson and others. They wanted to try and help fix problems they saw in Government IT. It was a non-partisan group i.e. many of us came from different political backgrounds.

For myself, I felt completely out of my depth. This was “big IT” as in huge projects with hundreds of millions spent on massive scale systems that I had usually only heard about because of some failure hitting the mainstream press. There were also big personalities. I met Francis Maude (he was in the opposition Cabinet at the time) which mainly consisted of me trying not to mumble “you’re Francis Maude” given I was a bit awestruck. What on earth was I, a state school kid who had