

Nottinghamshire ICT Review Report

August 2004

1. Introduction

The Nottinghamshire ICT theme group has been a 'virtual' group of organisations within the Nottinghamshire Infrastructure Consortium which has taken the information and communications technology (ICT) review forward. It includes:

- NAVO: Networking Action with Voluntary Organisations (Lead agency)
- NCVS: Nottingham Council for Voluntary Service
- NRCC: Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council
- BCVS: Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Service
- MCVS: Mansfield Council for Voluntary Service
- Enprove IT: Groundwork Mansfield and Ashfield
- First Data Training

The group was built round the Con<>nect steering group which carried out a major exemplar project on the feasibility of a new ICT Social Enterprise, MakeITWork, described in more detail below.

The purpose of this ICT review was to:

- map the uptake of the content management system and produce a model for extension
- examine the feasibility of establishing the countywide Con<>nect project
- identify the best ways of providing accessible ICT support to a wide variety of voluntary and community organisations and groups.

Whilst undertaking this work it became clear that a number of CVS and other umbrella organisations were providing some very useful ICT support services within certain geographical areas and details of these are summarised in this report.

2. Background

Nottinghamshire with a population of just over a million is a mixture of urban industrial and rural areas and covers 2,160 square kilometres (834 square miles). There are 7,000 voluntary organisations and community groups.

Recent years have seen a rapid uptake in the use of ICT by VCS organisations, partly as a result of various projects throughout the county that have promoted its use. However, anecdotal evidence gathered by members of the steering group and from other umbrella organisations, has indicated that these facilities are not used to best advantage, and that for technical reasons they often remain unused for extensive periods of time. A frequent complaint from larger VCS organisations for example, is that they are unable to distribute information to member organisations electronically because their equipment is either offline or broken. This evidence is also supported by a number of research reports including the 'FutureSkills' 2003 report and 'Enabling the Voluntary and Community Sectors' report by A. Hall (2001).

Voluntary and community organisations in the County and City have long wanted consistent, appropriate and accessible support for their ICT. Technical support is a particular issue, and otherwise very skilled people in the VCS often feel helpless to unravel the mysteries of keeping computers working effectively and securely. One very well established voluntary organisation said recently “I never want to be left paying £80 to reconnect a lead again.”

Some of the support required is successfully sought and found through commercial businesses in a straightforward way. Dealers sometimes not only sell equipment and software but also provide backup cheaply and quickly enough. However, others do not – there are cheaper and better deals on purchasing of some items, and callouts can be slow, expensive or not in tune with the needs of the customer. So there is room for a variety of providers of different kinds of services offering support to a wide range of voluntary and community organisations and groups at a price and quality that suits them, together with a way of choosing the best in each case.

3. Survey of Significant voluntary sector ICT Service Providers

NAVO carried out a small survey for this review amongst the main voluntary sector ICT service providers in the County using the pro-forma in Appendix 3. The following organisations were included in this survey:

- **Bassetlaw CVS**
- **Mansfield CVS**
- **Nottingham CVS**
- **Enprove**
- **Nottinghamshire RCC**

Results of the survey are included in the following section

4. Current ICT Support Offered

A number of developments in Nottinghamshire in the past two years have meant that we were not starting from a blank sheet – there are services and activities set up or in progress that are an important part of this review. These include:

- **Bassetlaw CVS ICT Support Services** (See Appendix 1 for more details).

Coverage: Bassetlaw (limited beyond the District)

Strengths: Website design and training on upkeep

Wide range of other training courses

Phone advice on most areas (little call out)

Charges: Committed to free service (Funding until 2006)

Comments: Importance of rural coverage

ICT is an important tool for community development.

Part of the support that BCVS offers to organisations in a predominantly rural area is free ICT support funded by the Community Fund. This support includes training courses and one to one support mainly via telephone but does include some onsite support. The ICT areas covered include:

- the use of e-mail and the web: beginners and advanced
- design, uploading, maintenance and effective use of your own website
- Introduction to using a computer
- Digital photography
- Using a digital camcorder
- Desktop publishing from basics to newsletter.

The purpose of the ICT support is to work **with** people in order to build their confidence, skills and knowledge base thus enabling them to use a wider range of ICT in their own organisation and to solve many of their own ICT problems.

- **Mansfield CVS Support Services**

Coverage: Mansfield District

Strengths: Networking on-site

Phone based trouble-shooting

Some call-outs, but developing web-based remote remedial system

Training courses

Charges: Free service for at least 2 years

Comments: Very new service. No activity with websites

Committed to Open Source Movement (alternative operating to Windows etc.)

This is a new service having been developed this year. A qualified ICT outreach supporter is employed to provide free computer support to 300 member voluntary organisations within a 6-mile radius of Mansfield. In addition to the call out service MCVS in collaboration with West Nottinghamshire College provide ICT certified computer courses. They also provide capital for computers and advice on the total cost and ownership of systems. Advice and guidance often takes place online and via an ICT chat room. They do not deal with website issues and where possible these are passed on to Bassetlaw CVS.

- **Enprove: a social enterprise within Groundwork Ashfield and Mansfield**

Coverage: Nottinghamshire and North Eastern Derbyshire

Strengths: Recycling service, supply of reconditioned computers and other equipment

Charges: Free recycling service
Reconditioned computers generally sold at low cost

Comments: Strongly linked to Con<>nect consortium
No training or website service

This was established some years ago and Enprove majors on recycling equipment and providing reconditioned machines to voluntary and community groups at reasonable cost. Enprove offer PC support contracts and services to the VCS covering telephone support, ad hoc onsite visits to resolve specific problems and full support contracts. They also provide a training facility for long-term unemployed people in PC repair and maintenance.

- **Nottingham CVS**

Coverage: Mainly City

Strengths: Technical support service, management consultancy, audit of Installations
Contracts for maintenance, varied formats – call-out, short/long term planned
Assist in design, supply and networking of systems – mainly advisory, recommending providers.

Charges: Vary – typically £30/hour call-out

Comments: Strongly linked to the Con<>nect consortium

NCVS currently provides ICT services to the clients within their building and their own IT systems. They provide an audit of installations, contracts for maintenance and assist in the design, supply and networking of systems. Charges vary but typically around £30 per hour. They are currently developing an on-line ICT support management system for the VCS in the city of Nottingham. The idea is that the support system will draw together information from a number of databases to facilitate a central administrative function.

- **Nottinghamshire RCC**

Coverage: Nottinghamshire and parts of North Derbyshire

Strengths: Technical support and website development

Charges: Websites charged by the day (£350), technical support 10 hours basic £400, additional hours £40 – all charges carry VAT on top of rates.

Comments: Activities all carried out as part of RCC social enterprise.

Virtual Village is the 'umbrella' Social Enterprise for ICT

Virtual Spanner is the Technical support service which forms part of Virtual Village

Blue Cat design service includes design of websites as part of corporate design

Advance Development includes IT Training

Evolve Consultants provide consultancy and research on a wide range of themes, and are specialists in rural policy work.

Strongly linked to Con<>nect consortium

The Virtual Spanner service grew from the original Virtual Village project, run on a funded basis by the RCC since 1997. This means that technicians have extensive experience in delivery of outreach technical support schemes and have serviced the requirements of over 40 rural resource and training centres across Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire over the past seven years. Since the move towards income generation work, the Virtual Spanner service has amassed a client base of over 80 VCS and private sector clients. Additional services available through the Virtual Village include web design and hosting, network installations and bespoke software design. The Virtual Village also provided support to the review of Content Management Systems and the NAVO Community Links project outlined below.

- **First Data**

First Data delivers a range of basic skills training programmes with associated support to people living in deprived communities living in the city of Nottingham. Courses include PC maintenance and a CISCO CCNA industry standard computer networking qualification, digital photography, design, desktop publishing and computerised accounts. They also equip, maintain and enhance ICT resources in the community and purpose equipped training centres that they use to deliver the courses.

In addition some one-off projects have contributed to understanding of need and resourcing of ICT services and support across the County:

- **NAVO Community Links** (See Appendix 2 for further details)

This was a £250k capital programme funded by the Home Office to re-equip all the main Nottinghamshire infrastructure bodies with computers, software and other ICT equipment and training during 2003. This project was, at least, a means of equipping 26 key strategic organisations with well-planned, co-ordinated and up-to-date IT equipment. About a third of the organisations were equipped for the first time with adequate IT resources, another third were provided with an overdue up-grade of very old and inadequate equipment. The final third were already fairly well equipped but gained added flexibility to their operation in enhancing training resources or the ability to support projects, for example, through the loan of laptops.

- **Metafocus County Council Survey** (Further details included in the report in Appendix 4)

Metafocus, (Nottingham based consultants) carried out market research for Nottinghamshire County Council with 50 SMEs (1 – 25 people) and 60 voluntary organisations. This clearly shows that 50% of both SMEs and voluntary organisations were without regular ICT support and that there is a significant market available amongst the 7,000 voluntary and community organisations and groups and the 30,000 SMEs in Nottinghamshire. It shows that there is a clear need for ICT support in these sectors, and that ICT support is seen as an improver of voluntary services and a tool for community involvement.

There are also **regional and national initiatives**, which need to be taken into account as ICT services develop in Nottinghamshire. Details have not been included in this initial work, but they include:

- Regional survey of ICT provision by SPAN (no information obtained at the time of writing)
- National project led by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations

This is a national survey aimed at building a partnership for ICT support required and currently available at national, regional and sub-regional levels in England, by a partnership led by NCVO.

- NCVO range of discounted services to voluntary organisations. The services include discounted computer hardware and software, IT support and training courses. Further details are available via their website.

5. Content Management Systems

NAVO has been involved with the RCC (Virtual Village) in testing the GNP Content Management System (CMS) as a potential tool for voluntary sector website development.

As a practical exercise some early spend money was used to build a Nottinghamshire Infrastructure website www.nottsinfrastructure.com. However, this did not happen for several weeks from late July 2004 because of changes in the GNP staff responsible for setting up the connection.

Generally the experience of the RCC staff in setting up the website is that the CMS is effective and fairly straightforward to use, but that it has few advantages over other CMS systems on offer. An important possible advantage was price. A licence had been obtained allowing 'free' voluntary sector use across the County. However, this turns out to have ignored some on-going charges, which would need to be paid by new users. Another disadvantage is that only limited design choices are currently available as templates on the system, and additional cost would be incurred to obtain other design/template choices apart from the GNP standard 'look'.

The limited project undertaken in this review suggests that GNP CMS is only one of a number, which might be of use to voluntary sector users, and that others are probably cheaper, more straightforward to use and more flexible in offering design choices. Further work should be done (possibly through MakeITWork) to draw up a list of CMS systems offering flexible design and

straightforward editing at reasonable cost for voluntary organisations wanting to maintain their own websites. Several organisations which already do this may be able to suggest candidates for inclusion.

6. MakeITWork – the Con<>nect project proposal

This major exemplar project looked at the feasibility of Establishing an ICT Technical Support Call Centre. - For the last 2 years the Con<>nect group has been operating as a countywide consortium and have worked together to identify and respond to the voluntary and community sectors (VCS) ICT support needs. Con<>nect had an idea that there was not only a gap in the provision of ICT support and advice in the VCS but a real need to stimulate ICT use amongst voluntary sector groups in general and the requirement for technical support to enable the VCS to integrate ICT into their daily activities and so came up with a project idea that could fill this gap.

The major focus for this project is to set-up a 'hub and spoke' delivery model involving a single port of contact telephone call centre to provide immediate technical assistance from trained operators to the countywide VCS. This facility will be managed by an independent voluntary organisation. The centre would co-ordinate referrals to the partners according to their specialisms and their ability in providing a variety of services such as emergency call-out, regular on-site technical support through circuit riders (mobile technicians), ICT training, web design services and consultancy. Trained personnel will staff the centre, allowing basic queries requiring only telephone assistance to be serviced immediately. Ultimately the aim will be to deliver this service on a social enterprise model, which can provide a sliding scale of charging for less well off groups.

Partner organisations will be able to offer users training with the aim of helping them to become more confident and self-sufficient to resolve simple ICT problems themselves.

The overall aim is to promote the integrated and effective use of ICT by the VCS in the county of Nottinghamshire. The project proposal addresses the problems of support provision and will ensure that support is provided in a cost-effective and sustainable fashion. It will also ensure that the services are delivered according to a social enterprise model of best practice, through a structure that understands unique sectoral needs and financial constraints, and it will allow development of the partner organisations' services to new levels in a way, which is co-ordinated, so reducing duplication and wasteful competition.

Metafocus has carried out detailed research into the feasibility of establishing a countywide technical support call centre known as MakeITWork. This would be established as a social enterprise with an appropriate legal structure. Their research shows that there is a market for ICT support amongst VCS and SMEs in Nottinghamshire. The full details can be found in the report in Appendix 4.

The starting point for this development was to look at the original Nottingham CVS management support system that they were in the process of developing

for the voluntary and community sectors in the city of Nottingham. The original specification has been modified and has resulted in different options for the call centre being examined.

The preferred option is a centralisation model with a central call centre that is managed jointly by the Consortium members and the call centre has full control of the call out team. There would be a single telephone number, marketed countywide. Other specialist work is absorbed into the call centre and sub-contracted to First Data and other agreed agencies.

The Call Centre

The call centre would have a number of technicians who would take calls, e-mails and text messages. They would be linked to the support management system.

There would be a small number of external technicians each with a vehicle, laptop and mobile phone with Bluetooth capabilities. They would be able to log in their availability and have calls fielded to them. If all the technicians are busy, the call will be held in a queue and the organisation asking for assistance would be notified of this. If calls are made out of hours an answer phone option would be available.

The likely cost of setting up the central organisations are included in the full report with on-going infrastructure costs for three years. Initial set up costs of £55k would be required. A target client base of around 400 accounts after three years and a potential of a 12% market share seems achievable.

7. Conclusions - The Best Ways of Providing Accessible ICT Support to the voluntary sector across Nottinghamshire

From the work undertaken for this ICT review it can be seen that ICT support needs to be provided in a flexible way in order to meet the needs of the voluntary and community sectors in Nottinghamshire. It makes sense to offer a menu of options in order to meet these different needs.

There are already a number of models of excellence already operating in parts of Nottinghamshire, for e.g. Bassetlaw and Mansfield CVS ICT support, Nottingham CVS, Enprove and the Virtual Village through the RCC. These are of a good quality and meet certain local needs in specific geographical areas.

There are geographical areas that are not receiving much ICT support – Broxtowe, Ashfield, Rushcliffe, Newark & Sherwood and Gedling, although the RCC has until recently provided free support to community resource centres in these areas. In addition to this there are certain technical aspects of ICT support, particularly for call-out, networking and fault correction that are not accessible or affordable to the voluntary and community sectors in most areas of the County. The available surveys indicate that many organisations do not get the support they need, or do not know where to get it if they need it.

There is an ongoing debate on whether services should be provided free or at reduced cost to smaller and less well-funded organisations, and cost is an important issue in all the new developments made or proposed. Where Community Fund, Neighbourhood Renewal or other support is offered for ICT

in local groups as a priority in particular areas then clearly low-cost or free services are possible. However, for more comprehensive coverage of the county and city, and to be sure of sustainable services, then particularly in the area of technical support the social enterprise model seems the most likely to succeed.

The MakeITWork social enterprise ICT Technical Support Call Centre would fulfil these needs and provide a comprehensive coverage. Moreover this support would be delivered through a consortium which itself originates from the VCS and so has an in-depth understanding of VCS needs. The menu of options needs to include all of the aforementioned. In this way the ICT support needs of the voluntary and community sectors would:

- Be strengthened and supported, including building their capacity
- Provide services that are flexible and in tune with the needs of the sectors
- Make more effective use of existing resources as well as bringing new resources into the area
- Provide services that are affordable to the sectors
- Provide the opportunity for the VCS to share skills and expertise
- Allow collaborative ways of working to flourish.

There is a wider picture of regional and national provision emerging from different layers of the review process, and avoiding overlap is going to be difficult. In addition to this whilst there may be moves towards a more rational solution to comprehensive geographical coverage of ICT support, the field of ICT is more susceptible than others in the infrastructure field to multiple provision to meet demands for consumer choice.

There are questions about database sharing and common databases have a strong ICT component and could have been included in this ICT review but are also part of the general infrastructure question of how to co-ordinate information services better, so have been left to the main part of the review.

Fully commercial suppliers and service providers also have an obvious and continuing place in the spectrum of services on which voluntary organisations can and should draw. The NAVO Community Links Project showed clearly how helpful commercial suppliers could be alongside other services, and sometimes ongoing support services from them may turn out to be the best options for a group in a particular phase of development.

However, many involved in this exercise have emphasised that ICT is a vital component in community development, overcoming rural isolation, volunteering, and support for BME, disability and other minority groups. It follows that a major component of the ICT services on offer to the voluntary sector needs to have detailed knowledge of the sector and be rooted in its values.

Training plays a vital role in infrastructure support to voluntary and community organisations. ICT training is provided as part of broader generic training programmes through a number of CVSs and other infrastructure bodies – it is

important that this is offered widely and locally for maximum accessibility to the sector.

Finally the two principal aims of this ICT review are therefore to make sure existing services and new developments are better known and that the criteria for choosing one or the other are clearer; and that a more comprehensive geographical coverage of affordable services across the county and city is offered, principally through MakeITWork.

Jon North, Shirley Macredie
NAVO
September 2004

APPENDIX 1

Report on Bassetlaw CVS ICT service and customer survey

CVS - Councils for Voluntary Service/Community and Voluntary Services essentially have five main functions:

- co-ordination and liaison
- representation and consultation
- development and support of voluntary and community groups
- practical support services
- promotion of partnership working.

The way in which, and to what extent these functions are carried out varies from CVS to CVS and is dependent upon financial resources, availability of people and their skills and knowledge, local demand and the strategic direction of the CVS.

Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Service (BCVS) is very clear that their task is to help support organisations in order to help them to work in the community.

BCVS carries out a bi-annual survey to find out what organisations perceive as their needs and part of this survey has a focus on ICT needs. This highlights the fact BCVS see ICT as a building block to help organisations develop their capacity. (Visit their website for further details at www.bcvs.org.uk).

Part of the support that BCVS offers to organisations is free ICT support funded by the Community Fund. This support includes training courses and one to one support on site and via the telephone. The ICT areas covered are:

- Using e-mail and the web: beginners and advanced.
- Design, uploading, maintenance and effective use of your own website.
- Introduction to using a computer.
- Digital photography.
- Using a digital camcorder.
- Desktop publishing from basics to newsletter production.

The purpose of the ICT support is to work **with** people in order to build their confidence, skills and knowledge base thus enabling them to use a wider range of ICT in their own organisation and to solve many of their own ICT problems.

In the last 12-month period 50 people from 45 organisations participated in training courses. 110 ICT consultancies to 76 organisations were carried out and 41 websites for a wide range of organisations were developed. In total 111 organisations benefited from the ICT support.

An evaluation of the ICT support offered to organisations was carried out at the beginning of 2004. A short questionnaire was designed for organisations to complete. This was mailed out and posted on the BCVS website for any organisation having received ICT support to complete.

76 questionnaires were completed and showed that everyone was extremely satisfied with the support they had received. The questionnaires highlighted that the support had enabled the organisations to develop and improve both what they did and the quality of what they did. In other words the ICT support not only improved their ICT abilities but also had a positive knock on effect to the whole organisation.

A follow-up to the questionnaires was to carry out five more in-depth evaluations, which were carried out by an independent consultant. The five organisations were different sized voluntary groups whose ICT skills and knowledge prior to receiving ICT support was varied and seen to be 'dismal', 'quite basic', 'minimal' and 'quite good'. Each organisation was interviewed using the same set of questions and the following is a summary of the findings.

All five organisations gained the initial support they asked for and more besides.

'Initially we asked for help with developing a website but we've had help with far more than this'

'Initially I asked for help with e-mail but I've also had support with changing our logo with our details on and help with using other programs'

In all instances the experience of receiving the ICT support was excellent. Comments made regarding this aspect include:
'Completely memorable and very clearly delivered and in such a way that we could soon move on. Very supportive, excellent'

'Invaluable. I rate it as highly as I can. The training and support has been clear, precise, accurate and honest'

'Very helpful one-to-one support. My knowledge was quite basic and I an adjusted his approach, which was good'

'It's been brilliant, great'

'Brilliant. Wouldn't be anywhere near where we are now without the support from BCVS and Ian specifically'

All five organisations reported an improvement in their ICT skills since receiving the support from BCVS. This included being able to create and maintain their own websites, delivering ICT training to community groups/individuals, use a range of different programs, use e-mail and the scanner and pass the skills on to the users of their service. In all instances

organisations stated that their confidence in using ICT had increased:

' We have gained in confidence and skills and can now do a wide range of ICT things we couldn't do before.'

' We are more confident with ICT skills. We can also pass these skills on to the users of our project.'

' ... We now have the skills in-house and we are already enhancing them.'

' We have done the website and gained confidence. We've drawn up a course plan so that we can deliver it again as and when needed. It's a sort of 'ABC' course.'

BCVS provided a range of ICT support that was appropriate to the needs of the different organisations. The ICT support was also provided in such a way that all organisations were able to see a knock-on-effect on their users.

' There are a number of ways that it's affected our users. A major one is where a group of community members have taken on the responsibility for reviving the Gala. One woman researched the history of the Gala. She didn't have any ICT skills or website knowledge. She had some training and support and then went on to design a full website using her own research.'

'The skills of our users have improved as well. For example, there was a guy putting together photos on the office pc and as a direct result of Ian's support he's now recording a video and publicity of the project.'

'The support from Ian has meant that staff are now able to provide some support to users, particularly young people using the computers. We couldn't do this before. With the support from Ian and being able to employ a part time ICT Skills tutor 11 users have now gone into full time employment. One of our users was a prolific offender and was being arrested twice a day but since starting the ICT course he's not put a foot out of place for five weeks.'

The ICT support received was seen by all as having affected their whole organisation in a positive way.

' We are now skilled up to quite a good level. It has helped to increase our profile and has built our capacity.'

' The support has widened the range of things we can do as an organisation. It's improved our efficiency.'

'It has opened up other possibilities. We now send information via e-mail and our website is a big element in our service. We've just had a letter from Exeter saying that they think our website is great and that they use it when training other people... We do more but the quality of what we do has gone up. It's not affected the words we use.'

Clearly it can be seen that the ICT support from BCVS has had a massive impact on all the organisations irrespective of their level of ICT skills prior to receiving the support. The effects have been such that organisations feel more confident when using ICT and are also able to use a wider range of programs and equipment. In all instances the capacity of organisations has been built and skills and knowledge have been retained and used by people in the organisations. This highlights the fact that as an infrastructure organisation BCVS fulfils its functions in an appropriate and accessible way.

Shirley Macredie, consultant
July 2004

Appendix 2



NAVO – Networking Action with Voluntary Organisations

Community Links - improving IT provision and support in key voluntary umbrella organisations across Nottinghamshire

In 2001 NAVO made a bid to the Home Office Capital Development Fund to upgrade IT resources and training to key voluntary sector umbrella groups in the county and city. At the time this request, which was for a 3-year phased programme of capital expenditure and training. Although this original bid was turned down, we heard in February 2003 it had been revived and approved on condition that the £256,000 was spent by the end of March 2003.

We decided we could deliver a valuable programme of improvements to around 25 organisations in the time allowed. The main expenditure was planned and committed by early April, and most of the training and installation was completed during the summer of 2003. Work on Broadband connections continued into early 2004 for the reasons explained below.

Outline diary of work completed

February	Formal offer received and accepted. 26 umbrella organisations contacted: 7 CVSs (including ALF) 6 VBx, 3 Black & Minority Ethnic organisations, 10 others. Rough lists drawn up.
March	Suppliers contacted. Estimates provided for about 80 items and variations and 20 services. Prices checked and queried. Visits paid to every organisation to check requirements. £256,000 received by NAVO.
April	Final estimates received and most orders placed. All orders completed and confirmed by mid-month and submitted to Home Office. Plan agreed for implementation.
April – May	Specifications worked out with 5 organisations with more complex needs based on budget agreed with supplier.
April – mid June	equipment prepared and delivered to groups
May – end June	Video conferencing training by BCVS
May-August	Software training; website design help from BCVS
September on	Broadband needs identified in more detail. Connections installed and initiated. surplus computers removed, refurbished and resupplied in voluntary sector by Enprove.

Suppliers – 3 chosen for computers, 2 local (Mansfield Computers, Pronet), one international (Dell).

- Dell, although it had a higher reputation, was more expensive when all extras were added and could only be used in a project like this with the help of local technical support for set-up, testing and installation of software. See note on relative costs of standard packages below.

- In addition, for one organisation (Rushcliffe CVS) we commissioned all their equipment and services en bloc from a local school with which they have a longstanding relationship. This proved to be helpful in cementing ongoing maintenance and development of their IT, but could not be widely applied because the school had decided not to take on further business.

Equipment log – all major equipment supplied was given unique identification numbering and labelled to indicate its origin with the NAVO Community Links Project funded by the Home Office. A log of each numbered item has been retained in the NAVO office.

Range of equipment – many specialist items ranging from large plasma display screen to wrist rests, but common items include wide variety of printers, cameras, scanners and projectors.

Recycled equipment – 60+ computers removed, upgraded and many redistributed free or at low cost to other voluntary organisations by Enprove (local recycling non-profit company, part of Groundworks). Generally, fewer machines could be dealt with in this way because of the unexpectedly high cost of installing up-to-date software in all the machines available, and/or because some machines were even older than expected.

Installation and induction – the amount of induction and support needed by some organisations, particularly those receiving networks using servers for the first time, was under-estimated. However, several organisations developed useful maintenance arrangements with equipment suppliers for the first time as a result of the project.

Software – Purchase of bulk licences via a national supplier (Phoenix) with a discount arrangement via NCVO was smooth and trouble-free. One organisation obtained their licence-checking facility as part of the package and this has proved very useful in a larger organisation with complex software installations.

Broadband – 17 organisations initially requested connections. Nottinghamshire Enterprises at Edwinstowe (public interest company set up to provide small business support out of the old Training & Enterprise Council) was commissioned to specify and provide all these. The following factors delayed and complicated implementation of this element of the project:

- Limited broadband enabling of local exchanges by BT until spring 2004. This influenced choice of Nottinghamshire Enterprises who had experience of delivering alternative (wireless, satellite and radio) solutions.
- Unreliability of these alternative solutions due to volatility in market and collapse of some providers.
- Wide variation in price of provision and ongoing costs between providers. Charities have to take on small business (as opposed to cheaper domestic) contracts and these are sometimes comparatively expensive.
- Obstacles to provision of cheapest option to some organisations because owners of premises have an exclusive arrangement with another telecoms provider.
- As a result only 9 of the 17 original organisations were eventually supplied via Nottinghamshire Enterprises but the costs involved were much higher for each than budgeted. Some of the remaining 8 obtained connections independently while others have still not resolved their need for fast internet connection – one had had to wait because they had to move out of their building for major structural repairs.
- We are negotiating with Nottinghamshire Enterprises for any remaining resources to be applied to the needs of these remaining 8 organisations to spread the benefit of the project as far as possible. Overall we estimate that in the end the project will have provided or contributed to setting up 12 new broadband connections in the Nottinghamshire voluntary sector.

Beneficiaries

Ashfield Links Forum	Notts Youth Organisations' Network	Self Help Nottingham
Bassetlaw CVS	Community Accounting Plus	NAVO – Networking Action with Voluntary Organisations (including the Families & Children's Forum)
Gedling CVS	Afro-Caribbean & Asian Forum	Notts Rural Community Council
Mansfield CVS	Race Equality Council	Notts Community Foundation
Newark & Sherwood CVS	Hostels Liaison Group	Enable (Voluntary Sector Learning & Skills Consortium)
Nottingham CVS	Notts Black Partnership	
Rushcliffe CVS	Health in Your Environment voluntary sector forum	
Beeston Volunteer Centre	VOSE (Voluntary Organisations Supporting Effective Management)	
Sutton Volunteer Bureau		
Eastwood Volunteer Bureau		
Hucknall Volunteer Bureau		
Kirkby Volunteer Centre		
Sutton Volunteer Bureau		

Looking ahead

This project was, at the least, a means of equipping 26 key strategic organisations in Nottinghamshire with well-planned, co-ordinated and up-to-date IT equipment.

For about a third of the organisations concerned this meant equipping them for the first time with adequate IT resources; for another third, it provided an overdue upgrade of very old and inadequate equipment; a further third which were already fairly well equipped added flexibility to their operation in enhancing training resources or the ability to support projects, e.g. through provision of laptop computers for loan.

At least 20 other associated organisations benefited from recycled equipment; a further 20-30 benefited from training, especially on developing websites.

The Project has reinforced our awareness of the need for flexible, local and comprehensive IT support to the voluntary sector. It has prompted support organisations to work together to develop social enterprises which can provide this support in a sustainable way.

Finally it has been well-timed in preceding the Home Office's Infrastructure Review. NAVO, the Project leader, is also joint leader of the Nottinghamshire Infrastructure Consortium, and many of the lessons and initiatives above will be carried forward directly into the ICT component of the Infrastructure Investment Plan.

(signed) _____

Jon North (NAVO Co-ordinator)

5 May 2004

Appendix 3 – survey proforma for NAVO enquiry during the Review

	Service	advice	geog	cost/hr	how quickly	comments (cont over)
Equipment supply						
software supply						
networking (wiring and config)						
call-out trouble-shooting						
phone-based trouble-shooting						
training courses						
website design						
website upkeep						
web hosting						
IT information service						
Other						

Appendix 4

Metafocus work – proposal for MakeITWork enterprise Executive Summary and Conclusion (full report available separately)

The report summarises the market research carried out with 50 SMEs and 60 Voluntary organisations. This clearly shows that 50% of both SMEs and voluntary organisations were without regular ICT support and that there is a significant market available amongst the 7000 voluntary organisations in Nottinghamshire and 30,000 SMEs(1-25 people). There is a clear need for ICT support in these sectors, and ICT support is seen as an enormous improver of voluntary services and a tool of community involvement. The main areas of opportunity for a voluntary sector support service are in the areas of specific overall technology and funding advice, telephone and call out support at affordable prices and free or low price in-house or tailor-made training in computer maintenance and website development.

Currently the partner organisations NCVS, NRCC, First Data and Enprove IT are all beginning to develop ICT support services with their own particular specialisms, e.g. websites, consultancy, training and recycled PCs. The report outlines three different levels of potential involvement for the Partners, from collaboration, where a call centre and administrative system is set up centrally to allocate jobs via the Partners, to partial centralisation, where there is direct control of the call out technicians and other specialist work. It is recommended that at least a form of partial centralisation is considered, together with the centralisation of other functions such as higher level consultancy and web design. The more centralised this social enterprise becomes, the more opportunity there is to introduce additional benefits to the voluntary and community sector, for example a possible central server/thin client approach and central administration, software upgrades and project funding.

The NEC Aspire call centre is recommended at a cost of £5373 and a team of five personnel recommended initially. A comparison of current partner call out fees is made with the private sector and pricing model suggested together with the qualifications needed for technical staff. Standards of service delivery and procedural requirements are listed and the structure of the social enterprise outlined.

In summary, specialist and collaborative ICT support needs to be provided to the voluntary sector to:

- Strengthen and support the voluntary sector
- Make more effective use of limited resources
- Avoid inevitable competition
- Offer lower budget / fair prices
- Provide joint marketing
- Create a potential funding route
- Give a different ethos / voluntary sector understanding compared to the private sector
- Ensure potential sustainability

Branding proposal 'MakeITWork' and slogan 'Helping you with technology' are introduced and an initial launch marketing plan and budget for the social enterprise is presented.

The likely costs of setting up the central organisations are tabled together with ongoing infrastructure costs for three years. A first idea for a revenue forecast based on the existing business of the partners and potential increase in revenue is projected. Initial set up funding of £55,000 (capital Expenditure, £12,500, marketing £15,000 and working capital £30,000) would be required - *Jon, don't quote these figures as chapter and verse yet as we will discuss the budgets in some detail on 23rd September and it looks as though eventual costs may be higher.* A target client base of around 400 accounts after three years, a potential 12% market share, seems achievable provided that a professional and effective marketing campaign is carried out.