

Digital Britain Unconference (London): Session report

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Name of session: Local media

Key questions considered:

1. what is the future of local media given rise of self publishing and decline of commercial models

Action points that could be included in the Digital Britain final report:

1 Recognise that the future of local news and information is bottom up, community generated, not top down broadcaster or printer generated 2 drop 1950s analogue baggage and stop talking about community 'TV' and 'radio' talk about community publishing 3 recognise that traditional broadcasters and printers and their lobby have failed in this regard - they have not adapted their business models - stop rewarding failed business models with funding 4 recognise that the web empowers communities to choose for themselves which medium (written word, audio, video) they need to empower themselves in communication, leave that choice to them 5 support communities that publish their own news and information, regardless of medium 6 apply vfm criteria to the spend per person engaged in producing the medium, awarding a large number (hundreds or thousands) of very small grants (~£2,000 for training say 15 people), rather than a small number (fifty say) of large ones 7 focus on skills and empowerment on the web, not technology 8 research extent of community web publishing in the UK - in some communities the local website is far more popular than broadcast current affairs shows

see for instance

www.kingscrossenvironment.com

www.parwich.org

www.digbeth.org

www.ventnorblog.com

www.london-sel.co.uk

www.talkaboutlocal.org

How might these proposals be funded?

Community web publishing is cheap to free on the ground (using free web publishing tools) - the only funding needed is some basic skills. Money put aside for digital switchover subsidy or money allocated to community radio and television should be made 'medium-neutral' and open to people to bid for on vfm criteria of cost per person engaged in producing the medium. Existing spectrum for community TV and radio could be auctioned off and the money put into online grass roots bottom up web publishing. 4IP is a good model - funding for venturing on the web.