



Local Government Open Data Breakthrough Projects Evaluation Report 2014/15

Project title: Open Business Rates Data

Lead organisation:	Carlisle City Council
Date report is submitted:	30 April 2015
Type of project:	Tool Development
Total grant:	£15,000

Summary of the project

To provide open access to real time information about Business Rates held by Carlisle City Council. This information is routinely provided to individual Freedom of Information requesters. Information relating to individuals is removed which is a time consuming manual process. As soon as data is provided it might be out of data and the format doesn't meet the government's open data standards.

An integration has been developed with the Business Rates database to provide open access to the required information at any time. The output is machine-readable.

Challenge/opportunity:

Current release of data was on request and the data was relevant to the specific request only. The project was to address the following issues:

- To automate the publication of the data and ensure it is up to date.
- To remove manual processing and the related risks of errors
- To remove a layer of bureaucracy
- To make the data available in open and machine-readable format to enable third parties to develop applications and widgets that use our information
- To provide the developed tool and schema to the neighbouring authorities and other authorities who use the Capita Academy system

Data published and uses:

- The users of our Business Rates data are expected to be mainly in the commercial sector. The number of requests has been rising steeply for a number of years.
- The council are currently developing a new website which will focus on transactions and provide round the clock access for service requests and immediate fulfilment of these requests where at all possible. On the new website a request for NNDR data will enable an immediate download.
- On the current website there is a small area dedicated to open data and transparency. The new integration will be available there, until the new website is live. (<http://www.carlisle.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/freedom-of-information/datasets/datasets-available-for-re-use.aspx>)
- The Council engages with the local business community through a group of 'ambassadors' (<http://www.carlisleambassadors.co.uk/>).

Approach to publishing data

- This project relating to NNDR data and the Open Data Incentive Scheme have acted as catalysts to achieve a change of attitude by data owners and publishers in the Council towards the open availability of data. The incentive scheme focused on publishing standardised data relating to public toilets, premises licenses and planning application. Additionally, the Council publishes a range of spatial data sets under the Inspire directive. Increasingly council officers can see the value for both council and data user and the potential savings of making data available by default rather than on demand only.
- An ODI certificate has been obtained for the schema and the data have been published on <http://data.gov.uk/dataset/open-nndr-data/>.
- The developed integration is being offered to Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils, both using the Capita Academy system. Especially Allerdale have shown a keen interest. It is envisaged to offer it to all bodies using the Academy system.

Benefits and impact

It is envisaged that publishing data in an open format will change and improve our relationship with and standing within the business community. It can be seen as removing barriers. In this specific case we expect an increased take-up by businesses. Currently we receive around 75 Freedom of Information requests relating to NNDR data across the shared Revenues and Benefits Service. At a cost to the authority of several hundred pounds per request, the automated process can save at least £15,000 per year, while at the same time providing a much improved service to the requester.

Further information:

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Please also visit <http://www.carlisle.gov.uk>