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# Idox response to the consultation on the Digital Strategy for Scotland



**Idox welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government and COSLA's consultation on the update to the Digital Strategy for Scotland. Idox provide technology to all 32 of Scotland's Local Authorities and Central Government. We also have a major operational presence with an office in Glasgow. We are passionate about the digital transformation of government services and fully support the collaborative approach to delivering a refreshed digital strategy which we believe can improve the lives of all of Scotland's citizens, businesses and communities.**



**Drawing on our specific area of digital expertise, we have focused our response on the strands of the digital strategy where we can add value as a partner: Services Working for All; Transforming Government; An Ethical Digital Nation.**



**We envisage a future digital Scotland where:**

- Services for citizens are enabled by cloud and digital technology that is accessible and simple to use, inclusive and designed around the needs of the users, is convenient (available 24/7/365) and easy to navigate.
- Transformation of back-office systems to automate processes has been completed and replaced by a focus on enabling 'invisible' interaction with government, in which data analysis allows the anticipation of user needs and proactive service delivery.
- Public services offer automated or virtual assistance, allowing skilled staff to focus on more complex interactions.
- Data is dynamically updated in real-time and can be easily surfaced and shared to enable the integration of services, mobile working, improved decision-making and accountability to citizens.
- The holistic and connected approach of 'once for Scotland' makes services more efficient, effective and transparent.
- There has been a fundamental shift from siloed capabilities to an ecosystem of connected platforms and services.
- Digital technologies support a carbon-conscious approach and the achievement of Scotland's transition to net zero.

We believe collaboration is critical to achieving this vision. The public sector is entering a new phase of digital transformation and the pandemic has accelerated change which was already in progress. It has highlighted the risks that stem from disconnected and disjointed processes and workflows. It has also shone a spotlight on the real value that can result from enabling end-to-end integration and the automation of processes. We've seen local authorities engage with citizens via new online channels, use digital to transform core processes, and teams working daily to tailor technology to enable collaboration and personalisation. We know, because we're helping them to do these things. Success requires all sectors to work together and follow a singular roadmap and action plan, rather than pursuing individual work streams and themes.

Scotland has a relatively small population making it relatively easy to achieve scale and focus on an advanced technology strategy. It already has many partnerships in place with private enterprise, a thriving tech education sector and new tech businesses emerging. But there is a need for urgency, to ensure Scotland does not fall behind. The risks to Scotland (and Scotland's citizens, businesses and communities, as well as future generations) of failure to deliver on the strategy must be kept front of mind.

# Four opportunities to realise a collaborative approach:

1.



**Industry  
engagement**

2.



**Open data  
and standards**

3.



**Normalisation  
of the cloud**

4.



**Digital democracy and  
civic participation**



## Industry engagement



Echoing the findings of the Mark Logan Review of the Scottish Tech Ecosystem, we believe more needs to be done to build a world-class tech ecosystem.

A collaborative future will involve Scottish Government and COSLA working together with the public, private and third sectors to take advantage of 'what we all do best'. There is already organisational infrastructure in place which can be leveraged such as the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government and the network of Innovation Centres in Scotland.

Access to a high-skilled talent base within Scotland is of paramount importance. Technology businesses such as Idox can play an important role in building the talent pool through schemes such as apprenticeships.

As our own international growth has demonstrated, there is a strong global demand for digital technology. Innovation can be spurred on through local and international collaboration, through initiatives such as knowledge transfer partnerships with universities.

The Scottish Government can help to increase the competitiveness of the country by encouraging more businesses to adopt initiatives like these.





## Open data and standards



In order to realise efficiencies and to enable the building blocks for further progress, we would identify open data and data standards as a priority.

Our experience of successfully partnering with Scottish Government and the local authorities on collaborative projects – such as Scotland’s national ePlanning and eBuilding Standards services, and the automation and digital transformation of democratic services – provide evidence to support the Digital Strategy’s emphasis on open data standards and interoperability. Future actions such as the development of a next generation Planning Scotland Gateway will depend on close partnership working between the public and private sectors on data.

Initiatives, such as the UK Government’s recently published Data Quality Framework, highlight the importance of enabling data reuse in the Scottish public sector. The Digital Strategy for Scotland proposes a data standards community of practice and we believe that this should be open to a wide range of stakeholders.

Trust and confidence is also vital in maximising the opportunities of digital technologies, particularly in relation to the delivery of government services. While open data will create a foundation for collaboration and innovation, it needs to go hand-in-hand with civic education on the benefits and protections included. The Digital Strategy for Scotland includes an action to launch a revised cyber resilience strategy, and this should address the importance of public trust as well as organisational competence. Commitments to invest in the Digital Identity programme and new payment platforms will also rely on public trust in data governance for success.

## Normalisation of the cloud



The Scottish Government has a stated ambition of 'cloud first' with the public cloud made the default delivery model for user-focused services.

Idox's cloud-based solutions, which enable crucial back-office systems, such as server management and disaster recovery to be managed remotely, provide a sound foundation on which to build future digital channel shift initiatives.

As well as removing the need for customers to provide infrastructure, hardware and ICT resources, cloud services will enable future

innovation and the application of emerging technologies, such as the Internet of Things, big data and AI. The forthcoming AI Strategy for Scotland should be an ambitious benchmark which offers a vision for ethical AI.

Digital infrastructure requirements will continue to evolve, and it must be recognised that skills and knowledge of the population will not necessarily keep up. Support will be needed to ensure digital inclusion as well as workforce training. The expertise of the private sector can be a useful resource for capacity building.

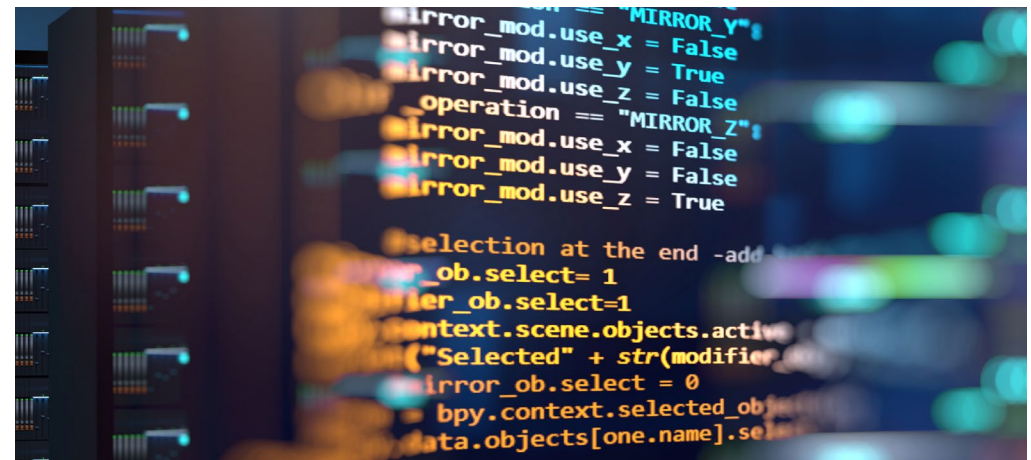
## Digital democracy and civic participation



For Scotland to reach its full digital potential, the Digital Strategy for Scotland should enable government to engage with citizens in new, active and meaningful ways.

As a business, Idox has a long track record of innovation in democratic services, including delivery of electronic vote counting, virtual training for electoral administrators and digitally transforming electoral registration with our innovative e-canvass solution. We have also supported public engagement and the integration of consultation tools in our planning products. From our experience, the principles of co-production in service design play an important role in shaping successful solutions.

Looking to the future, it is clear that democratic participation in government through methods such as participatory budgeting will become even more important. Inclusion incorporates both device and infrastructure access, as well as the knowledge and confidence to actively participate. To succeed, services must be designed around user needs rather than organisational needs and service delivery must be fully transparent and accountable.



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