



Unlocking the potential of smart cities: All-Party Parliamentary Group calls for coherent UK Government strategy

“The role of smart cities is not to create a society of automation and alienation, but to bring communities together”. (Iain Stewart MP)

In June, the [All Party Parliamentary Group on Smart Cities](#) published a report outlining the findings of its recent inquiry into how the UK Government can support the expansion of smart cities and enable the UK to become a world leader in the field.

It explains that although some people have concerns that smart cities are expensive gimmicks, or even something more sinister, the potential in becoming smarter could have a tremendous impact on the lives of citizens. And ‘smart’, the report makes clear is not just about clever technologies, but any innovative approach or solution that brings together industries or government departments to solve everyday problems.

Included in the report are the number of ways smart approaches can improve city life, such as:

- » **Making cities accessible for all** – improving the design process can ensure that people with physical disabilities are not prevented from enjoying the public spaces.
 - » **Empowering citizens in democracy** – new technologies can give citizens a voice by connecting them with each other, as well as those running services or those making decisions.
 - » **Reducing the strain on our health service** – providing citizens with access to their own health records can encourage greater responsibility for their own healthcare.
 - » **A more efficient, flexible transport system** – improving transport information can help citizens plan journeys and smart ticketing options can allow citizens to travel easily between transport services.
 - » **Creating a cleaner environment and enhancing air quality** – smart technologies can help address environmental challenges, such as improving traffic flow to help limit harmful emissions in congested areas.
-



If cities are looking for a blueprint to success, there have been numerous smart city initiatives introduced across the world. For example, the report highlights how the Scottish Cities Alliance, a joint initiative between Scotland's seven cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth and Stirling) and the Scottish Government, is encouraging collaboration and the take-up of technologies designed to improve air quality, traffic flow and cut pollution.

There's also two examples from further afield. Estonia, which is widely recognised as a smart city leader, is viewed as an example of best practice in data sharing. The former Soviet state provides citizens with control over their data by providing easy access to their education, medical and employment records through an online portal (with the option to request changes). And in Singapore, the "Smart Nation" initiative has become known for its use of a coordinating body to provide leadership to their smart cities agenda.

In concluding the report, The APPG make a series of recommendations to effectively drive forward the smart cities agenda. This includes:

- » encouraging the promotion of a smart culture;
- » convening smart standards and data; and
- » promoting the UK's smart city expertise overseas.

In particular, a number of interesting points are raised about how to promote a smart culture; from ensuring smart city initiatives focus on the outcomes for citizens to putting collaboration with other cities (and the sharing of best practice) before any form of competition.

Iain Stewart MP, chairman of the APPG on Smart Cities, summarises the report's main message, as well as calling for the UK Government to create a strategy. He argues:

"A coherent strategy from central government is needed to ensure a joined-up approach between businesses and those who work most closely with and on behalf of their citizens – local government. By fully embracing the smart cities approach, central government can empower local authorities to show ordinary people how smart can positively impact on their everyday lives."



idoxgroup.com



info@idoxgroup.com



0870 333 7101



[@Idoxgroup](https://twitter.com/Idoxgroup)