Destinations66 & Rapier Systems combined to deliver consultancy across eight projects that cover a total of 21 towns and cities.

The following looks at each destination’s application to highlight their project demands and expectations.

As previously discussed, there are remarkable similarities – hence our decision to look at a combined response, inviting all applicants to an event held in Perth that was staged on Tuesday 20th February.

The Highland Council project (not only covering 14 destinations but more advanced than others due to their digital roll-out plans) became the lead initiative by default; outcomes from our research helped to shape our responses and recommendations to all.
ABERDEEN summary

“The ultimate objective of the project is to realise the collective vision of delivering social and economic benefits through agreed collaborative use of digital services across physical and data assets in the BID area. Securing the assistance of an external Consultant at a preliminary stage will provide the applicants with expert guidance on whether all the component parts can be interwoven into an effective and deliverable programme. In turn, this will provide information for Aberdeen Inspired and Aberdeen City Council on the financial feasibility in terms of budgeting for the coming financial year(s). Aberdeen City Council will partner the initiative to find sustainable solutions for the continuance of its own public wifi infrastructure and to support private and community stakeholders in enhancing and extending provision.

The project will encourage the leverage of existing public and private sector digital, physical and intellectual asset to create a seamless partnership focused on defining and delivering a modern, digitally enabled city centre for the benefit of all stakeholders. Built with an open/commons ethos access to and use of asset will be codified and supported by a community of shared interest to build a sustainable infrastructure supportive of maintaining and innovating across the public and private realm to deliver enhanced management, quality of experience and economic performance.”
“Our Digital Town project forms a core part of a wider regeneration Project for Dumfries Town Centre and the wider Region of Dumfries and Galloway.

We want to provide always on WiFi no cost access.

We have researched available platforms and believe the 802 Intelligent WiFi to be suitable. 802 Intelligent WiFi is a public and guest WiFi platform that allows the customer WiFi experience to be highly personalised and data to be monitored, managed and maximised.

We believe it will also encourage direct engagement between the community and businesses with consumers and visitors, with the opportunity to explore more creative approaches to consumer/visitor engagement.

We also think it would be beneficial to seek Digital friendly WiFi accreditation.

We are defining outcomes as the things we believe will change because of this investment. These include:

- **Increased use of Dumfries Town Centre, its facilities and services**, especially in “out of office” hours
- **We are especially interested in seeing more young and older people in the Town Centre**
- **Better access to the services and facilities** provided by our partners, and the wider Public, Private and Third Sectors
- **By using the data we gather, better provision of facilities and services to residents of and visitors to Dumfries**
- **Greater access to digital services**
“The project looks to maximise and innovate following the current investment in a town centre Wi-Fi system which goes live in Autumn 2017. The Hamilton BID seeks support to maximise the opportunity this new infrastructure provides for businesses the 3rd sector and visitors to the town centre. The Hamilton BID business plan states we want to help town centre business embrace digital technology and build on the social media offering for the town.

The capital investment provides the infrastructure to drive increased visitor numbers and will facilitate links to key platforms such as national information e.g. Visit Scotland and local business’s and tourist sites. However the infrastructure is viewed as the start and developing the interaction between digital information and the hard town centre assets are now a priority.

Support to develop skills training within businesses and digital material and platforms will be important to driving the success of the network and it is this area we seek funding support.”

“Digital inclusion is a priority under South Lanarkshire Councils Poverty and Inclusion Strategy and infrastructure and skills support allowing increased access to digital information including UC is important to citizens in communities such as Hamilton.

The support will guide in how the BID can use the Wi-Fi network to connect with citizens and businesses and also guide how businesses can improve their profile through new media.

The project will also look at connecting the 3rd sector such as the CAB to both business and citizens. Training to businesses to improve web pages, social media interaction and new promotion Apps.”
“The WiFi project was one of the leading projects defined from the Inverness City Region Deal. The aim was to deliver **high quality WiFi** to Inverness City Centre and into the Highland Towns.

£500,000 was ring fenced for this project and the project has gone through a physical survey and a very successful Pilot Project.

Currently the City Centre rollout is taking place and a proposal has been approved for **WiFi installations to 14 towns throughout the Region**.

Our aim is to boost tourism in the region, boost economy, improve social inclusion and citizens digital opportunities, digital upscaling.”

“We would like help with our roll out to the Highlands and consultation about **monetising** these sites with a view to **maximising the opportunity** that these towns offer.

Reviews of our strategy and our engagement would also be very useful. Long term approaches and community engagements, benefits outcomes would be particularly useful. Engagement with local businesses would also be very useful and helpful in fitting in with our plans. **We currently have a lack of resources throughout THC and this would help address the issue on this project.**”
“Our vision is to create a digital town where the smart use of technology makes our town centre or ‘The Square’ the prime focus for our past, present and future. The Square is the heart of Grantown; it’s a grassy, tree lined main thorough fair, through the town centre. It plays host to numerous events around the year: New Year gathering, Farmers Market, Summer Fair, ‘Motormania’ Vintage Vehicle Rally, ‘Thunder in the Glens’ Harley Davidson Bikes, Christmas parade.

However it lacks information points for display to tourists and casual passers bye. To avoid unnecessary signage which would spoil the appearance of The Square, we thought to make the leap and become a digital town. An app would not only tell the towns story, but in addition with a pre paid Cash Card, would connect with local businesses and the services they provide to visitors.”

This is the only project where the objective falls out of kilter with the others: that said, in our research, we discovered the only reason Grantown made this application is because they’d failed in funding as part of the Highland Council Wi-Fi roll-out.

They would prefer to be in line with others – and to have the opportunities that free public realm Wi-Fi affords.
MORAY summary

“The project as outlined will provide a wide range of information on services, attractions, events & promotions relevant to the resident community & visitors.

The investment into the free town centre Wi-Fi will achieve the following outcomes:

- Visitors can explore the town’s centre attractions ensuring future tourism growth
- Businesses can promote their offers and drive their businesses forward
- People with any kind of disabilities can access information about the accessibility of various routes & services, so maximising social inclusion.
- Access to public services such as toilets or local comfort scheme (business allowing access to their toilets at no cost) through exploring the commercial aspect it becomes sustainable and viable.

The Moray plan is also out of line with others to a degree: the applicant has made personal investment to deliver the town’s Wi-Fi network and seeks a commercial platform to obtain a return on that investment.”
“We want to transform the digital infrastructure across our town in order to **capitalise on the economic and social benefits** that improved digital adoption can bring.

More specifically, we would like to facilitate the **creation of accessible high quality public access wi-fi** across our town, supported by **development of a digital strategy** focussed on the concept of making Stornoway a ‘Smart Town’ in line with the ‘Internet of Things’ concept.

This would encompass a **Stornoway portal/website** and potentially other applications in order to maximise the impact of free wi-fi and promote Stornoway under the ‘Visit, Live, Work, Study, Play and Invest’ theme agreed in the Stornoway Masterplan.”
DESTINATION NEEDS
collective summary

ABERDEEN
• delivering social and economic benefits
• whether all the component parts can be interwoven into an effective and deliverable programme
• sustainable solutions for the continuance of its own public wifi
• enhancing and extending provision
• a seamless partnership
• defining and delivering a modern, digitally enabled city centre for the benefit of all stakeholders

HAMILTON
• to maximise and innovate
• maximise the opportunity this new infrastructure provides for businesses the 3rd sector and visitors to the town centre
• developing the interaction between digital information and the hard town centre assets are now a priority
• Digital inclusion is a priority
• to connect with citizens and businesses and also guide how businesses can improve their profile through new media

DUMFRIES
• regeneration Project for Dumfries Town Centre
• provide always on WiFi
• encourage direct engagement between the community and businesses with consumers and visitors
• Increased use of Dumfries Town Centre, its facilities and services, especially in “out of office” hours
• interested in seeing more young and older people in the Town Centre
• Better access to the services and facilities
• By using the data we gather, better provision of facilities and services to residents of and visitors

THE HIGHLANDS
• to boost tourism in the region, boost economy, improve social inclusion and citizens digital opportunities, digital upscaling
• monetising these sites with a view to maximising the opportunity that these towns offer
• We currently have a lack of resources throughout THC and this would help address the issue on this project.

STORNOWAY
• to capitalise on the economic and social benefits
• creation of accessible high quality public access wi-fi
• development of a digital strategy
• encompass a Stornoway portal/website
• maximise the impact of free wi-fi and promote Stornoway

The summary needs from GRANTOWN and MORAY are not included above as they sit apart from the others: Grantown only applied for the project funding as they missed out on the Highland Council’s ‘stage one’ Wi-Fi roll out. Moray are only interested in monetisation to fund work already delivered.
As highlighted, The Highland Council project became the lead initiative and key focus due to scale and progression.

It became obvious very early in the research process that ‘monetisation’ is not an option that will fund installation, maintenance and management of digital connectivity. It cannot be relied upon to deliver a sustainable solution.

In December, we presented to representatives from the 14 destinations that form the Highland Council’s ‘stage one’ roll out.

Our presentation made clear the fundamental importance of sustainability and management beyond capital expenditure on infrastructure. Crucially, this was based on a real time case study: the business improvement district, Kirkcaldy4All.

In 2010, the Fife town had had free public realm Wi-Fi installed in a programme funded by the Scottish Government and Fife Council. There was no maintenance or management plan in place and the network very quickly became redundant and irrelevant.

In 2016, Kirkcaldy’s BID adopted the network, invested in maintenance to make good – and invested in management to ensure it delivered – for the BID, for the town’s businesses (levy payers), for partner and stakeholder organisations (including the local authority) as well as for the end user – residents and visitors to the town.

Our presentation to the Highland 14 took a step-by-step approach to explain the rapid changes in digital communication, the opportunities and challenges afforded by public realm Wi-Fi, potential audiences, locations, the offering, timescales and funding options … all with the Highland Council’s key requirement in mind: “to boost tourism in the region, boost economy, improve social inclusion and citizens digital opportunities, digital upscaling” – mindful of their challenges, primarily “a lack of resources throughout THC “.

The following pages show some of the outputs – initially shaped by feedback from the Highland Council presentation.
The feedback we received from the Highland Council presentation was unanimously positive …

The only question mark over our proposals was the funding.

Our next area of work would set out to best understand funding needs and opportunities to address the different requirements of all eight projects.
Although we had significant levels of information from each of the eight applications from the Digital Towns Programme, we took soundings from each of the eight project leaders – sharing a questionnaire to drill down beyond their applications.

All shared almost identical ‘audience profiles’ for those they are seeking to support through the Digital Towns initiatives …
Similarly, we plotted their answers as to why they are considering their various approaches – the single, most important reason behind their plans: again, there is significant cross over in their responses …
Asked how the digital projects they are seeking to deliver will help those for whom it is designed – the ‘benefits’ were repeated in many guises …

Only two sat out with the shared picture: Moray’s geo walking app and Grantown’s Gift Card. As explained, we have spoken with both and understand their thinking behind these. Both are ‘stand alone’ projects that can be supported by improved digital connectivity, but not separate from it.

There was near unanimity on the perceived benefits of improved digital support from all other applications.
A number of the applications asked about funding and sustainability. Our research demonstrated that no single existing funding channel could be relied upon beyond a 1-2 year timeframe to deliver all that is being sought. One by one, the channels were explored and dismissed. We had to look at sustainability beyond current funding limits to find a model to deliver not only the infrastructure but also the ongoing maintenance and management.
Based on our collaborative work with Kirkcaldy4All, we arrived at a unique proposition: not the replacement of an existing Business Improvement District, but the creation of a new ‘improvement district’ model that could work via the same mechanism by charging a % of non-domestic business rates to help destinations that are not in a BID.

**DIGITAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

- Ensure ongoing investment beyond any current budgetary commitments.
- Access seed-corn funding through business improvement district channels to run demonstration pilots – to prove the project value.
- Ensure the daily management of delivery – not only the Wi-Fi but also supporting digital channels to optimize the benefits.
- Guarantee 5 years+ of longevity/sustainability as a ‘BID’ model - paid for as 1% of non-domestic business rates from businesses and organisations in each location.
- Provide ‘ownership’ to each community ensuring delivery benefits those the project is designed to help.
Taking account of each and every requirement highlighted by the 21 destinations across the eight projects, we arrived at our recommended solution – our Digital Improvement District could support all the needs and demands that have come out of this consultative process.

All project leaders were invited to Perth on the 20th February to see how we had arrived at our position. Not all were able to attend. The presentation has been shared with all post the event – including those destinations who applied for the STP Digital Towns Programme funding but were not successful in winning through last autumn.
At the event in Perth, we shared the new model and our thinking – based on our own experiences and the research project that has driven this consultative process. To all intents and purposes, the model is being delivered in real time in Kirkcaldy – public realm Wi-Fi supported through integrated digital and social media communication, 365 days of the year to support multiple audiences.

The following structure was proposed on the 20th February as an example of how our Digital Improvement Model could be delivered.
Mindful of the changes taking shape in Scotland’s place management landscape, we also proposed a timeline for demonstration projects – showing all concerned, including local authorities, how the idea can be taken forward.

**TIMELINE**

We propose any demonstration project (funded through seed corn investment matched by the relevant destination’s local authority) is allowed 15 months to prove its value before the ballot is held. To that end:

- Months 1-3 will allow liaison between all interested parties to establish a draft Business Plan and include the formation of a Steering Group (representative of the levy paying community).
- Month four will see the official launch of the Digital Communitation project (12 months from an agreed ballot date) with service reviews built into Months 6, 9 and 12 for feedback to the project facilitators.
- The proposed ‘improvement district’ ballot will be set for Month 15.
- If successful, the full five year term – working to deliver the business plan under a service level agreement – will begin.
INDICATIVE COSTS
required investment

It is clear from the projects that there is a myriad of levels of delivery already ‘out there’, but there is almost no joined up thinking – and no sustainable plan.

Some local authorities, Business Improvement Districts and business associations have committed to investment in infrastructure – but there’s no plan or money to maintain or manage the network, let alone an understanding of how that network can and will grow exponentially over the coming years.

And so place managers face a Catch 22: they all want improved connectivity. They have some funding to commit to ‘a level’, but no funding, resource or skillset to deliver the ongoing management that will ensure the connectivity delivers anything tangible for the identified audiences. And as each day passes, the identified audiences demand and expect ever improving connectivity and digital interaction.

The gap between these two positions is an ever-widening chasm. Destinations across Scotland are falling behind – and the ‘powers that be’ are failing their communities.
The key learning from this process has been the failing of local authorities to understand the complexity of digital roll out – and an unwillingness to consider ‘the new’.

At the Perth event, Phil Prentice spoke of the dangers of ‘digital redundancy’ – the fear of investing today as something better might come on stream tomorrow. As a consequence, villages, towns, cities and BIDs are being held back not only through a lack of investment but also through a lack of awareness. The opportunity exists to make a significant and positive difference.

The pilot programme launched by Scotland’s Towns Partnership had set aims to:
- encourage new strategic collaborations
- improve digital participation and skills
- create scalable best practice ...
  - for digital deployment in towns/town centres and city neighbourhoods

Our research, analysis and recommendations ensure not only the delivery to achieve these aims but also to meet the multiple demands and expectations of each project.