



# Data Observatory

## Project Business Case

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## 0. Document Control

### 0.1 Document Approval

Name	Organisation	Role	Approval	Date
Beverley Compton	NELC	Project Executive		
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### 0.2 Revision History

Version	Author	Review	Reason For Issue	Date
1.4	Travers Sampson	ND / SY	Addition of Costs	150408

This document was created using the Template Version 1.4

### 0.3 Document Distribution

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### 0.4 Document References

Reference	Document Identifier	Document Title

## 1. Purpose

The Data Observatory has been initially developed to include 2001 census data comparable by wards through a range of filters. The Observatory in its current state is accessible through the council intranet.

The purpose of this project is to set up a web based system to expand the Data Observatory by the use of Geowise Data Server and Instant Atlas software. This will make comparable cross-border small area information widely available in order to:

- Help deliver the aims of the Local Government White Paper, particularly those around improving the information available to communities and Councillors and those around facilitating cross border partnership working including Multi-Area Agreements.
- Increase the capacity of the authority to accelerate the closing of the gap between the least and most successful neighbourhoods by strengthening benchmarking, decision making and performance monitoring.

This small area data will include data extrapolated from various sources including internal systems, performance indicators, LSP data and national statistics, covering a variety of themes including employment, education, crime and health and demographics.

## 2. Reasons

- 2.1 Initiatives like Neighbourhood Statistics and NomisWeb, driven by the aim of more effective resource targeting, mean that the volumes of published statistical information with some form of geographic reference are growing at a rapid rate. A Data Observatory would source, disseminate and present this data to users who may not otherwise have the time and/or skills to access this information.
- 2.2 Freedom of Information legislation means all organisations are now under pressure to make information available in a form that is relevant and useful to their customers. User expectations are also rising within organisations, partnerships and local communities that relevant (ie. local level) data will be available in a form that is of value. This data should be easy to find, explore and use for a wide range of purposes.
- 2.3 In parallel with these developments local government is required to work in partnership with other agencies and third parties to meet cross-cutting business agendas. Increasingly this partnership working is focused at the local community level. To meet these requirements North East Lincolnshire needs to share key datasets effectively. In the UK there are also drivers from the area of performance management (PM) and 'best value'. The UK Audit Commission are supporting a pioneering project termed 'Area Profiles' to deliver Quality of Life and Organisational Performance indicators to the public, councils, local strategic partnerships, government and regulators. They are also driving forward the new Corporate Area Agreement (CAA) which will build on the existing CPA process which

sets out relatively specific requirements through their Key Lines of Enquiry. This specifies that partners should jointly agree on local data needs, co-ordinate the collection of local level data, share it between partners securely, understand the socio-economic make-up of local communities and assess the gaps and shortfalls in these areas for service delivery. This understanding will enable intelligence led decision making in the areas which will contribute to the Value for Money and Efficiency agendas.

- 2.4 At the Local Strategic Partnership level, LSPs are obliged to deliver sustainable Community Strategies to DCLG and Government Offices which include much of the same type of information. At the regional level bodies like Assemblies and Development Agencies are obliged to develop region-wide spatial, economic development and housing strategies. North East Lincolnshire delivers an annual report which profiles the borough in some detail while regional bodies also produce similar 'State of the Region' reports. The huge effort expended in the collation of all the intelligence to populate these reports and strategies is driving organisations to develop local intelligence systems to make efficiency savings<sup>1</sup>. Content can be effectively cut and pasted into these reports. The Research and Information Officers can also then support a rolling programme of outputs as data can be managed more efficiently and kept up to date. This will support future policy, strategy and planning development, enabling “joining up” and ensuring consistency in terms of data about North East Lincolnshire.
- 2.5 Within UK local government the need for solutions to improved knowledge management has been recognised over the past few years resulting in the DCLG / IDeA National Knowledge Management Project. This had a specific topic dedicated to 'Local Intelligence Systems'. In the business case report it highlights the importance of being able to compare regional patterns for performance assessment, facilitate cross-partnership working, support funding bids, complement the corporate planning and decision-making process and empower communities with local level information.
- 2.6 The advent of the Internet and Intranet makes it cost effective to publish large amounts of information online. The growth in PC ownership and skills mean that more people than ever before – both within a local authority and among its partners and customers – can usefully interrogate and analyse such data.

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<sup>1</sup> For the Savings from efficiency mentioned in the Business Case the calculation is based on the following calculation: -

Initial costs will be outweighed by the cross departmental savings in time spent by research staff finding, analysing and disseminating data. For example the research officers can receive several ad hoc requests each week, each taking an average of 2hours to deal with. If ten enquiries like this can be intercepted by the site this could save over £13,000pa. This saving is in the policy and partnerships team alone. With a further six officers employed by the council having research in their job title this can be multiplied to £52,000. As many other officers carry out research activities as within their day to day responsibilities (almost 50 officers are listed in the research officers network) this figure is likely to be very conservative.

## 2.7 Links with the Local Government White Paper

The main links are through providing citizens and Councillors with better information and through facilitating partnership working to deliver efficiencies.

Citizens need cross barrier cross-border, comparable local information in order to:

- Assess the absolute and relative success of local service delivery and assessment;
- Get engaged in service design, delivery and assessment;
- Be aware of, and understand (through neighbourhood charters) local priorities and standards;
- Get strong evidence to enable a Community Call for Action;
- To make informed choices in relation to the services provided by the Council and its partners.

Councillors need cross border, comparable local information in order to:

- Better understand the issues, in a wider context, for their areas;
- Actively weigh up competing views and priorities;
- Identify where similar issues in similar localities have been solved;
- Fully support Community Calls for Action;
- Make policy decisions in relation to the future focus of the Council.

Councils need cross-border, comparable local information in order to:

- Compare local service delivery to set benchmarks for new inspection processes and identify areas for service delivery and identify areas for service improvement;
- Deliver the White Paper's aims of joined up delivery;
- Deliver the macro-intervention of city regions, e.g. social exclusion, inner city economies etc;
- Facilitate the sharing of learning and what works in comparable areas;
- Ensure strategies are linked and coherent through a bottom up approach;
- Have a common starting point for partnership approaches to delivering services and ensuring environmental sustainability;
- Have a common starting point for the development of multi-area agreements;

- Make the best use of existing analytical resources.

Other relevant policy drivers

- The project has links with the LAA process as it evolves because having comparable cross border local indicators could allow a richer discussion with individual Councils, as well as following a more robust process for benchmarking performance. It would also feed into the development of the new Multi-Area Agreements.
- There is an ongoing requirement for those working across the region, city region or county for consistent small area data across distinct boundaries for strategic planning or research. For example, studies of transport corridors or economic zones often use wards for measuring community impact, but these are often too large to produce the level of detail needed.

### 3. Options

The preferred option for development is to utilise Geowise Data Server and Instant Atlas software. This option provides NELC with a customisable 'off the shelf' Data Observatory. No other options have been considered.

In terms of development it is anticipated that a populated Data Observatory will be available through the NELC website by the end of September 2008. The timescales however are at the moment tentative and will be reviewed during the creation of the PID.

The Geowise software will provide NELC will satisfy the following requirements outlined in the project mandate:

- The Data Observatory should be easy to access and interrogate for all users and should contain key functions for effective data management and uncomplicated usage.
  - The ability for administrators to upload data sets to the Observatory site.
  - A clear and simple to use interface for generating reports incorporating tables, graphs and maps at the discretion of the user.
  - A method for managing access to sensitive data through a login and password function.



## 4. Benefits

- 4.1 The Data Observatory will provide a locality-centric evidence base to support a wide range of users interested in sharing information, understanding current state 'on the ground' (outcomes) and monitoring change over time.
- 4.2 Area based data at any level can be shared effectively creating substantial efficiency saving across the authority.
- 4.3 Will make third party information available along with the council's own statistics and indicators allow for this information to be made available in a centralised resource which will be available internally and externally. This should promote partnership working.
- 4.4 Improved overall staff productivity at an intra- and inter-organisational level by making trusted data available in seconds instead of potentially much lengthier data trawls.
- 4.5 Improved staff productivity within research and intelligence areas - data experts can deploy their knowledge more effectively by giving their customers the ability to answer relatively simple, ad hoc requests themselves.
- 4.6 Large, complex profile reports such as the State of the Borough produced on an annual basis can be produced much more efficiently - perhaps more importantly, the situation 'on the ground' can be monitored at more regular intervals in line with the data refresh cycle.
- 4.7 Data will be made available to all parties with users being able to access information through a centralised resource.
- 4.8 By consolidating data management function time and effort is reduced.
- 4.9 By utilising Geowise software NELC are effectively sharing development costs with all other Geowise customers. This will NELC's Data Observatory to benefit from new software developments and upgrades.
- 5.0 Geowise provide a support network which would not be available through internal development of a Data Observatory.
- 5.1 By allowing Researcher Officers administration rights data sets can be added to the Data Observatory without requiring IT assistance. This will impact less on IT time and also provide the ability of the Data Observatory to be updated more efficiently.

## 5. Risks

- 5.1 It is expected that the project management of the Data Observatory will take up one full time equivalent within the PPD team. However

annual leave, sickness, staff turnover could interfere with the project day to day advancement.

- 5.2 The success of the project depends on partners sharing information. This will involve facilitating links with partners. The product will also depend on directorates providing detailed and accurate performance information for dissemination.
- 5.3 Risk of reputation to NELC should the Observatory encounter delays, development problems, lack of usage.
- 5.4 Expectation of what can be produced within the allocated timescale provided.
- 5.5 Other work priorities calling on staff resources.

## 6. Timescales

- 6.1 A suggested project plan is already plan detailing several development stages and milestones. A summary of the plan is below

Stage 1: Project Initiation. End Date 30/4/2008  
*Establishment of Project Team, Signing off of PID, Work Package, Communications Plan.*

Stage 2: IT Installation. End Date 16/5/2008  
*Download and Installation of Data Server, Development and redesign of Test Site.*

Stage 3: Identifying Data. End Date 30/5/2008  
*Identifying and collating relevant internal / external data sets for the Observatory.*

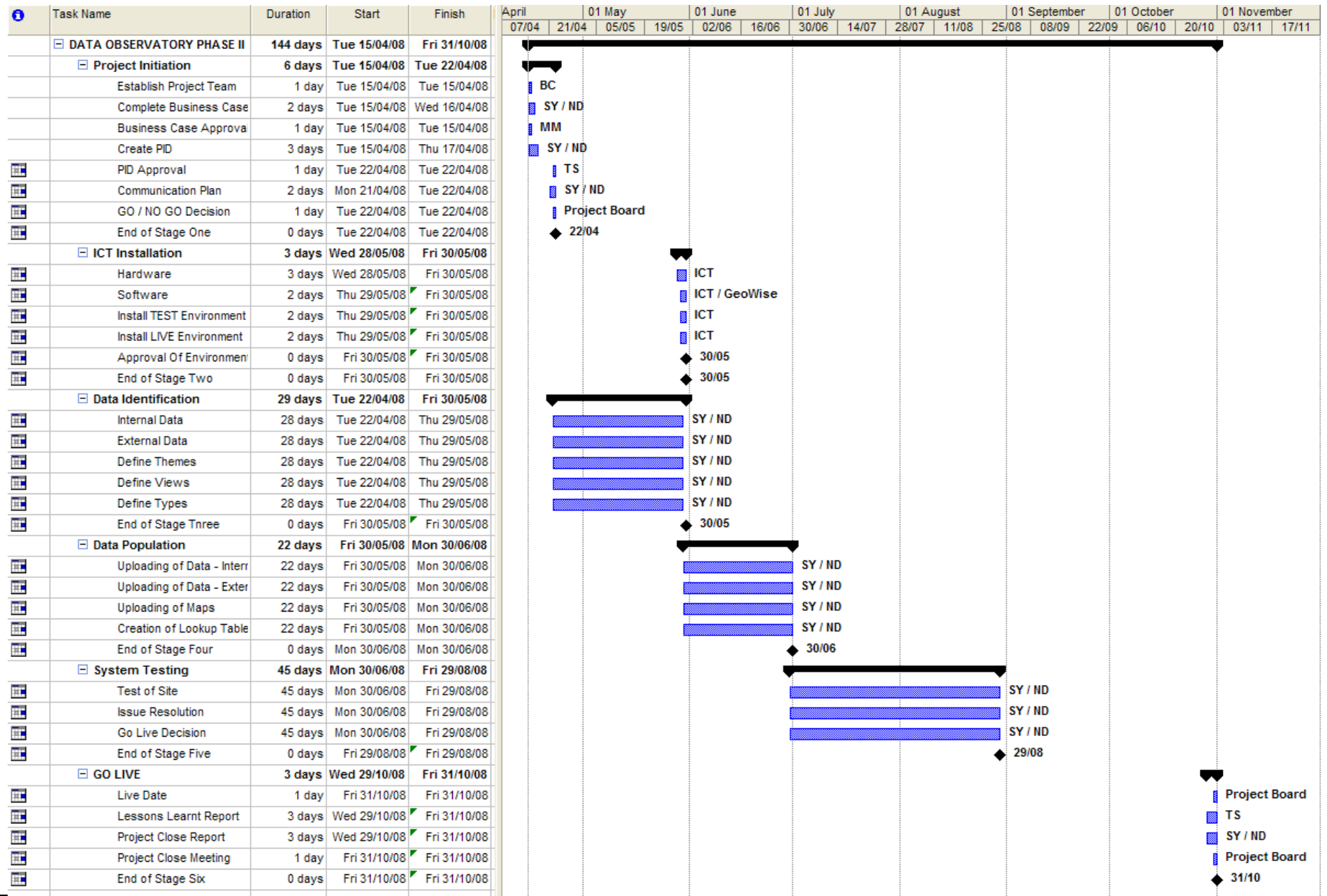
Stage 4: Population of Data. End Date 11/6/2008  
*Uploading of data, maps, look up tables.*

Stage 5: Testing. End Date 29/8/2008  
*Test of site, resolution of issues.*

Stage 6: Live Launch. September 2008.

# Project Business Case

# Data Observatory



## 7. Investment Appraisal

7.1 A Department of Communities and Local Government survey of sixty-nine local authorities who had developed Data Observatories found that the average number of unique visitors every month is 2,650; a trend which is increasing. This means that factoring in North east Lincolnshire's population size the site could expect over one thousand visitors per month.

Seventy-one per cent of systems managers had observed a change in the way regeneration activities are undertaken following the establishment of their systems. This impact is best characterised by one interviewee who stated "decision makers have become more aware of the need for setting realistic objectives and monitoring performance".

7.2 The information the site supports will aid funding bids, a small increase in the success rate of bids could result in thousands of extra pounds for the authority. This success has been reported by several authorities who have created an Observatory.

7.3 The site will help meet the aims of the White Paper by empowering communities.

## 8. Benefits Realisation

8.1 Information pertaining to the communities within North East Lincolnshire is made available to communities therefore meeting the aims of the White Paper.

8.2 Greater cost effectiveness in data management and collation within all directorates.

8.3 Stimulated innovation and creativity

8.4 The needs of a wide range of customers who would not generally have access to such a resource are met.

8.5 Benefit realisation is aided by user audits which monitor types of users and enquiries. Success can be monitored not only by the number of indicators available but also the types of queries ran through the Observatory and the regularity of customer visits. Feedback on the site can be gathered through the administration module of the Data Observatory and will be monitored by the Research and Information Officers.