Manifesto for a Digital Britain

"The UK is one of the world's most connected economies with ICT firmly embedded in the economy, education and wider society. But we still face the challenge of ensuring that everyone in society benefits from digital connectivity. The Manifesto for a Digital Britain is a welcome opportunity for a wider debate on this and I am sure it will make a significant contribution."

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Rt. Hon. Patricia Hewitt MP

"Information and communications technologies have moved from being a fringe issue of interest only to technologists to the centre stage of British politics. This reflects their increasing importance in the daily lives of citizens in our country. Getting digital technology right, in both technical and social terms, must now be a central plank of policy for any government and if the Manifesto process can help do that then it will serve a very useful purpose."

Liberal Democrat Spokesman on IT and e-government issues, Richard Allan MP

"The impact of digital technology on the future of health services will be dramatic. Digital Imaging, the ability to enable remote specialists to look at images and effect diagnoses, the use of electronic patient records to ensure patients are treated swiftly and accurately, electronic booking of appointments: all of these and more are applications which can help to deliver enhanced quality of care. Bringing the benefits of digital technologies into public service is a key component of raised productivity. We welcome the ippr's Digital Manifesto as an opportunity to explore these questions."

Conservative Shadow Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley CBE MP

WHY DIGITAL BRITAIN NEEDS A MANIFESTO

The Manifesto for a Digital Britain is driven by the belief that new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are sufficiently important in our society and economy, that no area of policy-making can afford to ignore the implications of the changes that they bring. The rapid diffusion of ICTs produces new political choices at a rate that can be disconcerting. Yet, properly understood and exploited, ICTs can be channelled towards tremendous human benefits.

The politics of ICT are too often missing from public debate. ICT is a dominant topic for contemporary economics, but in politics, it tends to be sidelined as a special interest. The purpose of the Manifesto is to tackle this, so that policy-makers can no longer dismiss technological issues as 'geeky', and ICT itself is no longer seen as something outside of our collective control.

The sense that ICT is driven by forces outside of politics means that policy-making is very often reactive, where it could be proactive. It is commonplace to predict how technology will change society in the future, but less so to outline the choices that may or may not lead us to this future. The Manifesto will offer an alternative to futurism, and aim to lay out a variety of ICT-related choices that will confront policy-makers during the next parliamentary term. It will attempt to locate these decisions within a long-term narrative about the significance of ICT in British politics, so as to help policy-makers consciously shape Digital Britain.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MANIFESTO

The Manifesto for a Digital Britain aims to drive digital issues into mainstream political discussions, and to do this by acting as a bridge between technology and policy communities. In order for ICT to become a mainstream concern, technological concepts and choices have to be translated into political concepts and choices.

Through seminars, conferences and discussion papers, the Manifesto will open up a politically neutral space within which competing voices on this topic can be heard. With endorsement from all three leading parties, the process will be as open and welcoming as possible. The Manifesto process will aim to:

- *Facilitate dialogue between ICT experts and policy-formers from across the political spectrum, for the benefit of all.*
- *Highlight areas of technological change which will be of profound political relevance between 2005-10, and explain this relevance in an accessible fashion.*
- *Illuminate the political choices that these changes throw up, and place them on a political spectrum.*

The process will conclude with a major published report in Spring 2005, in which the ippr will lay out its own position and make a comprehensive set of recommendations to Government.

SCOPE OF THE MANIFESTO

The focus is on specific areas of policy where it is most critical that ICT is thoroughly understood. The role of government remains the preoccupation throughout. The Manifesto process will be split into seven themes, each of which is sufficiently broad to include a variety of perspectives, but will focus in on specific policy issues. Topics are selected that are either politically pertinent in 2004, or which look set to emerge as such over the course of the next parliament. The themes are:

1. *Jobs and Work -* The arrival of ICTs in British workplaces has been swift and widespread. New technologies enable profound changes in the way that value is created and work is carried out. Issues addressed include off-shoring, and new working practices.

2. *News, Information and Digital Media –* Well-functioning democracies need trust-worthy sources of information, and up-to-date news. New media provide constant up-to-the-minute news, but also ever greater choice of information source. This theme addresses this tension between the citizen and the consumer, as a receiver of news and factual information.

3. *Communities & Participation -* Networked infrastructure is often perceived to reduce our connection to place, and our dependence on face-to-face interaction. Similar analyses have been made of new ICTs, but a contrasting view is also widely held. To some, networked technologies ought enable new forms of participation in organisations. Questions of social capital and local governance will be addressed, in relation to ICT.

4. *Security & Privacy -* The decentralisation of digital technology creates new freedoms but raises significant security concerns. The centralisation of digital technology may remove freedoms but is an important tool in Government's ability to offer security. Constant trade-offs need to be made by policy-makers. This theme will focus on specific key issues, including ID cards and child safety.

5. *Ownership and Intellectual Property –* Intellectual property rights are one of the most divisive political issues of the digital age. Yet political concern for this issue is often confined to those with an interest in either law or digital media. The broader political significance of the issue is rarely drawn out, which is the purpose of this theme.

6. *Public Services -* Future investment in E-government will depend partly on our ability to measure its benefits for users. The ippr's Digital Society Team have already carried out the first major research into public value and electronic service delivery. This theme will take this further, with an over-arching look at e-government, benefits to citizens and public value.

7. *The Machinery of Government –* Many of the benefits that ICT offers citizens occur within Government, making it more effective and efficient. This theme will look at how ICT enables new ways of governing, and how policy-makers should act to exploit its full potential. The role of the E-Envoy, the implications of Peter Gershon's efficiency review, and entirely new forms of Government intervention will be looked at.

MANIFESTO OUTPUTS

The Manifesto aims to be a catalyst for public debate. Between now and Spring 2005, the Manifesto will be dedicated to disseminating new ideas and recommendations from across the political spectrum. To do this, the following dissemination tools will be used, in order to integrate communities in politics, business, and technological expertise.

Seminars and conferences
Each theme will be developed via a small seminar series, or a major conference. An events timetable will be available soon from the ippr web site. Seminars will be followed up with the publication of summary documents on the ippr web site.

Publication of Background Papers
Papers will be commissioned from some of the leading national and international experts on the issues being addressed. All commissioned papers will be published on the ippr website as background papers to inform wider public debate.

Position Papers
In addition to background papers, ippr will publish a series of short policy position papers offering policy recommendations for wider public and party political consideration in the run up to the next general election. Policy papers will be published for each of the themes highlighted in the programme above.

Media Profile
The Programme team will continue to disseminate research messages to a wide audience by maintaining and extending its high profile in the media throughout the Manifesto process. The ippr is currently seeking collaborative media partners for this initiative.

Emerging Dissemination Techniques
Throughout the manifesto process, new dissemination techniques will be sought, making the ippr a 'participative witness' to the political and technological changes covered by the Manifesto. Online-publishing forms a major part of the dissemination process, and careful attention will be given to formats.

The Digital Manifesto programme can be followed and commented on via a project weblog at www.digitalmanifesto.org. We encourage any interested parties to use the weblog to give feedback on our events, publications and proposals.

In early 2005, the weblog will be used to run an online public consultation, to seek out views and policy ideas within each of the seven research themes.

In Spring 2005, the ippr will publish a landmark document, A Manifesto for a Digital Britain, and will launch the document at a major public event.

THE DIGITAL SOCIETY TEAM

For almost a decade now, the Digital Society and Media Programme at the ippr has been examining the public policy challenges and opportunities thrown up by digital technology. In publications such as *Code Red: Progressive Politics in the Digital Age; e-participation in local government; and New News: Impartial Broadcasting in the Digital Age* the programme team has attracted high levels of both media and ministerial attention and has addressed issues as wide-ranging as public service communications in the online world, privacy, electronic service delivery, e-democracy and digital equality. The team behind the Digital Manifesto consists of:

> *William Davies, Senior Research Fellow, w.davies@ippr.org*
> William joined the ippr in June 2004. Prior to this, he worked on The Work Foundation's iSociety project, where his research focused on the relationship between social networks, communities and new media. He is the author of *Proxicommunication: ICT and the Local Public Realm* (Work Foundation, 2004), *Invisible Villages: Technolocalism and the Enabling Council* (New Local Government Network, 2004) and *You Don't Know Me, But...: Social Capital & Social Software* (Work Foundation 2003)

> *Jamie Cowling, Research Fellow, j.cowling@ippr.org*
> Prior to joining the ippr Jamie completed a MSc in Media and Communications at the London School of Economics. His research interests include media and communications policy and arts administration. He published *New News: Impartial Broadcasting in the Digital* Age with Damian Tambini in 2002.

> *Kay Withers, Research Fellow, k.withers@ippr.org*
> Kay Withers joined the Institute for Public Policy Research as Research Fellow in 2004. Prior to this, she worked as a researcher to Brian White MP and was previously policy adviser to the Internet Services Providers Association where she led the Association's work on data retention and the Communications Act. Her research interests include e-Government, internet regulation and intellectual property rights. She has contributed articles to several e-Government and IT industry publications on a variety of regulatory issues.

> *Emily Keaney, Research Assistant, e.keaney@ippr.org*
> Emily joined the team after working as a conference organiser producing independent business conferences. Prior to this she completed a Modern History degree at Oxford University. She provides events and research support to the team as well as leading the research on ICT and international development.

The team will also be supplemented by a small number of commissioned consultants engaged to lead on discrete portions of the agenda. The ippr is grateful to the Manifesto's major sponsors:

For sponsorship of specific themes, we thank: