

**A Standalone Civic Reporting Function
for Clackmannanshire Council's website.**

Siobhán Boyle

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Abstract

Clackmannanshire Council is a council based in Central Scotland. Their website is a portal for the citizens of the Clackmannanshire area to find out local information about services that the Council offer and also to serve as a conduit for the interaction between the two. As part of the Making the Most of Masters Programme offered by the University of Stirling, the Council proposed a project to update their Report It functionality on their website.

Their current Report It function is basically a PHP online form for citizens to fill out to report a variety of problems ranging from abandoned vehicles to environmental problems such as fly-tipping and issues with parks run by the Council. The problems with the current function as it stands are that it is full of legacy code and essentially it does not reflect the mobile responsiveness of the rest of the site. On a customer experience level, it does not offer the same transparency and ease of reporting such as new reporting services offered by private firms such as FixMyStreet, which the council would have had to pay to use. It was this transparency especially that the Council wished to investigate so that it would bring them in line with the Open Data movement within government institutions to be open by default [14].

In order to achieve this objective of improving both the customer experience with transparency and adopting the new Open Data policy, a thorough research into what open source technologies were being employed in the UK, the US and Europe to tackle this problem was done. The trend in government institutions was to use Open311 as a standardised protocol to achieve this. This simply turns HTTP requests into a format such as XML or JSON, so that it could be re-used elsewhere. FixMyStreet were using this to achieve their service. Upon further investigation, a solution was found in an open source Drupal distribution called Mark-a-Spot which included an Open311 server and it did not require extensive upgrades or programming knowledge base that they did not have.

In order to use this, a configuration of the servers of the council was achieved. The new challenges of restyling an open source Drupal installation with all its coupling and hardcoding of elements was met head on and produced a product that could easily integrate into the existing website and brought great feedback from the web manager, Customer Services and the general public it was tested on. It achieved the Council's target of making the form responsive on mobiles and greatly improved the customer experience by allowing transparency by letting the customer track their reports on a map and a list and allowed the council the back-end process to be able to achieve the updating of statuses. The standardised format also allowed future sharing of data with other Councils. All in all, it met the objectives of the brief and the Council hoped to implement it after reviewing their back-end processes.