



OWL Wins Top e-Government Award

20th January 2009

Hertfordshire Constabulary and Direct Path Solutions Ltd received a prestigious e-Government National Award for "excellence in innovation in strategy at a local level". The award for OWL, a unique system for the police to keep in touch with members of the public and for Neighbourhood Watch coordinators to manage their own watch schemes, was presented by John Suffolk, the Government's Chief Information Officer after a video message from the Prime Minister was played.

Gordon Brown said "The 2008 awards saw a record number of nominations from across the country - individuals, teams and organisations who are using new technologies in innovative and creative ways to deliver better public services."

OWL (Online Watch Link) has allowed the Constabulary to effortlessly target crime prevention messages and appeals to households and businesses and was just one of 11 winners out of a staggering 588 entries from government organisations and councils up and down the UK. The category in which OWL won is for "delivering innovative strategies which have delivered above-average results in improved services, transformed processes & results, increased effectiveness."

Hertfordshire Police Authority member, Brenda Griffiths, said "I can speak for many in saying that we are truly delighted to have received such a prestigious award for OWL. The system was developed by Neighbourhood Watch for Neighbourhood Watch – and this was about giving the schemes what they wanted and needed. Now thousands of people around the county can benefit."

Gary Fenton from Direct Path Solutions, the creators of OWL, said: "Hertfordshire has proved the way forwards by approaching Neighbourhood Watch from a new angle that provides coordinators with tools to manage their own watch schemes via the Internet. Hertfordshire Constabulary had the foresight to develop OWL with us and thanks to everyone's hard work, including an astonishing 7,000 ward, area and street coordinators, Hertfordshire now has a thriving network of watches."



Chief Constable Frank Whiteley said "I would like to thank Gary for all his hard work, our own Watch Liaison Officers, and the dedicated Neighbourhood Watch coordinators who have helped make OWL such a thriving success. OWL has revolutionised Neighbourhood Watch, allowing us to send out key messages to the communities in Hertfordshire, helping the county to remain a safe place to live and work."

Gary continued, "With this national award, the Government has commended the technology used in Hertfordshire which keeps the public informed of local crime and major incidents while ensuring active neighbourhood and business watches are maintained and expanded across the county. It paves the way for other police forces to take up the challenge and use OWL to achieve a similar level of success."

"For the public this award means the Constabulary has excelled itself at making the best possible IT solution in the country accessible to Neighbourhood Watch and all the other schemes too. For us it reinforces the belief that OWL can spread its wings – pun intended – and be taken up by neighbouring counties and beyond to better manage their watch schemes, improve public communications and empower the 1000's of volunteers who selflessly give up their time to serve their community."

OWL's success has continued with Staffordshire Police recently launching the system and it's also used in Flintshire in North Wales. Discussions are continuing with other police forces looking to greatly enhance their community messaging facilities and watch schemes.

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About OWL

OWL is a unique Internet based system to support Neighbourhood Watch, School Watch, Shop Watch, and dozens of other schemes. It provides easy-to-use administrative and communications tools for both communities and the police allowing everyone to fully participate in setting up and running group-based schemes. OWL greatly enhances local communications from the police via phone, text messaging, fax and email. Anyone living in a participating county can check if they're already in a watch or ask to join one by visiting www.owl.co.uk and clicking on the Watch Finder link.

OWL has previously won "Britain's Digital Elite", an award from Microsoft celebrating the most innovative use of software in Britain. OWL has also won Best Website at the Hertfordshire Business Awards.

About the e-Government National Awards

The awards, fully supported by the Cabinet Office, highlight excellence in innovative government services. The winners were announced at a glitzy evening event at the 700 year old Guildhall in London on 20th January 2009. For further information about the awards, the winners and to see the Prime Minister's video message please visit:

www.publictechnology.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=18619

A photograph of Gary Fenton and Brenda Griffiths with the award is available on request.

For further information about OWL please contact Direct Path Solutions Ltd on 01438 812873 or email info@directpath.co.uk



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