

Speech: How team with cardboard boxes for desks saved taxpayer £60 million

Just over five years ago, a group of people using cardboard boxes for desks came together in an office in Waterloo. Their central idea was that citizens shouldn't need to understand the structure of government to interact with it. Their mission was to turn 1,884 separate websites into a single site for government.

Five years on, that single government website, [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), has been visited 4 billion times: more than 3 million times every day. Delivered by the [Government Digital Service](https://www.gov.uk/government) (GDS), it has become a part of our national infrastructure. It has won design awards and is recognised as a world leader in public sector digital innovation.

Government should help not hinder citizens and by putting users first and simplifying tasks which before took days and many pages of form filling, it has done just that.

For example, the Carer's Allowance digital service removed 170 questions from the application process. It saved precious time for those who spend their lives caring for others.

It is now possible to register to vote online, renew your passport online and, if, in the course of your life you wish to import a ferret, GOV.UK has made it easier than ever to find out how.

As encouraging as big numbers and awards are, they are not the motivation, nor were they when the government brought together that group of people in Waterloo. Transforming services has always been about making a difference to people's lives. By doing this, it creates a government that is more open, adaptable and responsive. One which is inclusive and puts the user first.

The creation of GOV.UK remains good for government and good for the people it serves. It brought departments and agencies together. It has saved the taxpayer over £60 million. People visit GOV.UK to access services and information which affect their families, homes and jobs. Its importance cannot be overstated. GOV.UK is where government communicates what it is doing, thinking and how it is working.

For instance last week we launched the ethnicity facts and figures service. As the prime minister said on its launch: "By bringing this information together in one place for the first time it will shine a light on the issues we are facing."

This is the whole point of GOV.UK: bringing everything together in one place and making it as easy as possible for people to find, understand and use it.

For me, one of the best features isn't anything that has been built: it's the commitment to continuous improvement. GOV.UK is not finished now, and it

never will be: it will always be a work in progress, adapting and improving all the time.

As we look to the future, we see that websites are just one way of accessing content and services over the internet. Technologies such as Alexa and Siri are good examples of this. Work is under way at GOV.UK to prepare content so that it can adapt to meet just this sort of technological change.

I'm excited at the work the GDS is doing to lead and enable departments to play their role in realising the possibilities that the internet and digital advances offer. GOV.UK is part of the transformation of public services designed to meet the needs of today and equip us for the technological changes of tomorrow.

Those who have brought us to this point have my thanks and congratulations. The work they have done has redefined how a modern government should serve its people.

I know that the work on digital government is never finished. GOV.UK and the Government Digital Service have vital work to do to ensure that as technology moves forward, the government fulfils our duty and keeps pace. I hope the cake and balloons are ready as you celebrate your fifth birthday today, and I send my very best wishes.