

thinkWhere Helps Falkirk Council Tackle Poverty with Open Geographic Data



thinkWhere is working with Falkirk Council to develop a mapping tool that aims to help improve the lives of its citizens. The development is being funded by the Open Data Institute and will be led by the goals of the council's poverty strategy known as "Fairer Falkirk" which aims to reduce poverty and the impact of poverty, ensure inequalities between the wealthiest and the poorest are reduced and provide a better life and equity of opportunity.

The thinkWhere developed mapping tool will make use of open geospatial datasets to improve access to, and signpost citizens to, essential Falkirk Council support and resources. Working in partnership, Falkirk Council and thinkWhere will initially address two themes of 'Digital Access' and 'Food Provision'. These will target an estimated cost of

deprivation of £1,200 a year per person and help reduce the impact of food poverty.

"Fairer Falkirk is our way of making Falkirk a more equal place to live," said Sally Buchanan, Fairer Falkirk Manager at Falkirk Council. "Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of poor access to services so improving service accessibility is a core objective. Another key concern for those on low incomes is knowing where to access food, for example via food banks or other resources that provide food for children during school holidays."

The service mapping project will make use of OpenStreetMap, often described as the 'wiki mapping platform' – an editable map resource. Despite being completely free to use, OpenStreetMap presents certain challenges that have historically limited its use within the UK Local Authority sector. Falkirk Council and thinkWhere aim to transform the way OpenStreetMap data is used and engaged with, allowing non-specialist users to exploit its potential.

Alan Moore, chief executive of thinkWhere added "There are vast amounts of help available, but knowing what is available, and where, is a challenge for both for the public, and for frontline council staff. Working with Falkirk Council, we hope to make it easier to engage, improving access to existing services, whilst encouraging the broader use and adoption of open geographic data."

The Falkirk project was one of just four chosen to receive funding, support and advice from the Open Geospatial Data Stimulus Fund. The resulting tools, guidance and good practice developed during the project will be openly shared with other partners, giving local authorities a greater capacity to publish and use open spatial data.

For more information, visit www.thinkwhere.com