

Round-Up

CIRCUIT RIDER NEWS DIGEST



Issue 3 | Oct/Nov 2007

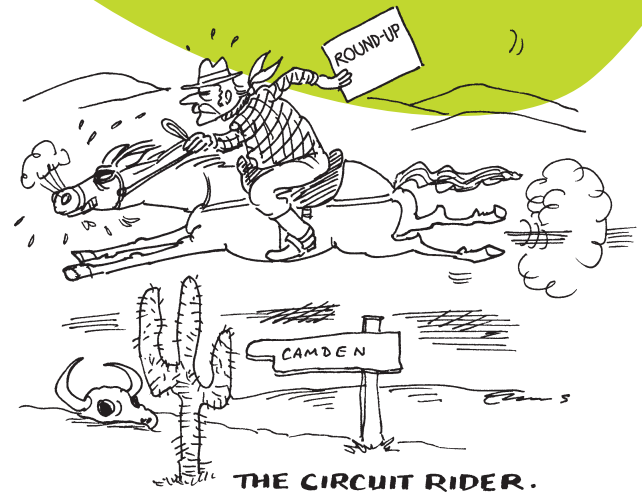
Introduction

Welcome to issue 3 of Round-Up, the ICT Hub's news digest for Circuit Riders. This issue has, without conscious effort, managed to turn itself into a mainly open source affair given the high level of activity around certification and slowly increasing use and acceptance of open source technologies both by organisations and their support staff. Some years back NOSI, the NonProfit Open Source Initiative, issued an important introductory document, their open source "Primer". It sought to demystify open source and provide a plain language guide to using open source in the not-for-profit environment. This is currently being updated and the new and improved Primer will be available soon from <http://nosi.net/>. I think that even the most ardent open source advocates will admit that the revolution has not yet arrived (a view shared by NOSI) – but it's great to see that it hasn't gone away and that there is a genuine (and generally usable) alternative to proprietary software.

Ian Runeckles, editor, Lasa
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ICT Hub Circuit Rider development project

Since the last Round-Up an advisory group has been set up and will have its initial meeting in early November. The meeting will consider the updated principles along with the benchmark ICT standards which are being prepared currently and a draft "logic model" which outlines the outcomes we expect to work to and indicators of success. More news as it breaks at www.lasa.org.uk/circuitriders/training.shtml



What is a Rider?

In the Introduction to the last issue of Round-Up I asked whether readers were happy with the term "Circuit Riders". Whilst my mailbox wasn't exactly overwhelmed with Riders happy or otherwise with their job title I did have one reply – Simon Wintle from the Communities @One Project in Denbighshire, responded by saying "We have never felt happy with the term e-Rider or any other sort of 'Rider' appellation. So my job title is 'Community IT Support Officer' – this is partly because we are also a part of the local council. I also tell people that I work in 'Community Development' or as IT Consultant."

Tony Okotie, Regional ICT Champion for the East Midlands based at High Peaks CVS, in his article on 'trusted local advisers' in the September ICT Hub newsletter http://www.ictHub.org.uk/articles/local_ict_support.html noted: "Then there is language. I think that "IT development worker" is more understandable (and more defined) than "Circuit Rider" – and that is after running a project called "Derbyshire Circuit Riders" for two years to do exactly what I am advocating here. Unfortunately, Circuit Riding is a generic term used to cover lots of roles,

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What is a Rider? *(continued)*

including technical support. That's not to say that IT technical support projects aren't needed – in fact quite the opposite – IT development workers and IT technical support workers need each other and need to work together.”

Coincidentally, Marc Osten posted to the US Riders mailing list: “I'm sure many of you will enjoy knowing that the term Circuit Rider is now being used to describe homeland security staff who interview Iraqis trying to resettle in the United States.”

There's a National Public Radio story on this at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14495731>

In addition, of course, there are several other types of Circuit Riders – the third hit on Google for the term brings up the bluegrass band by the same name – www.thecircuitriders.com (maybe we'll invite them over to the Conference...) – and the Wikipedia entry at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circuit_rider_\(Religious\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circuit_rider_(Religious)) describes them as Methodist “saddlebag preachers”. Various religious sites follow and then more familiar technology advocates start appearing.

Personally I think there are pros and cons – some Riders love the term as it sets them apart from yer average “IT consultant” and, seeing as it has only been adopted in the VCS, gives it a certain uniqueness in a homogenous consulting culture. I know some have problems with the potential confusion with religious Riders but these are rare in the UK – yes, the Methodist circuit exists here but the Rider term isn't used.

The jury is still out...

Events

Advance warning...

- **ICT Hub Circuit Rider Conference 4.0 – Standards and Skills for the Sector**

BVSC, Birmingham
February 28–29 2008

Planning is underway for the Conference following SurveyMonkey consultation on session design and content. Keep an eye on the UKRiders list (<http://lists.lasa.org.uk/lists/info/ukriders>) for more information. Booking will open in December online over on www.lasa.org.uk/circuitiders

- **ICT Hub Conference – Helping you use technology to achieve more**

Kensington & Chelsea Town Hall, London
March 11 2008

Project & Case Studies

FOSS Certification for the VCS

Chris Bailey at Advice for Life recently announced the work they are doing on Free and Open Source Knowledge certification:

“As part of the work for the ICT Hub FOSS in the VCS project we are developing a new certification for FOSS in the VCS, Free and Open Source Knowledge (FOSK). We are doing this in partnership with the Linux Professional Institute (LPI) whose certification for Linux system administrators has world wide recognition.

We want to fill an important gap by developing a non-technical certification for anyone who is “responsible for recommending and/or choosing FOSS solutions for an organization”. Though the new certification is initially being designed for the UK VCS there are plans for it to be beta tested in the USA and Germany too as a step towards establishing it internationally. A FOSK certified individual will have an understanding of the Linux and FOSS environments and knowledge of the solutions available in the FOSS world together with an understanding of the issues involved in their implementation in the VCS.

We are now in the final stages of recruiting 12 Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) internationally who have been chosen for having a good cross section of skills and knowledge concerning FOSS use in the not for profit sector. This SME team will begin work early next week. Interestingly it will have a majority of women on it. We think this can be a certification that will get away from the “male geek” image FOSS often still has in some quarters and encourage more women to take part in FOSS development (the figures are awfully low at the moment).

The syllabus for the certification will form the basis for FOSS trainings for the VCS early next year. Accessibility issues concerning FOSS use will be an important part of both the certification and the trainings.

Details of the new certification and timeline for its development are now in a wiki at: <https://group.lpi.org/publicwiki/bin/view/Examdev/FOSK>

We want to involve the widest number of people from the VCS in developing the certification, so we very much welcome comments and suggestions through the wiki at all stages of development of the certification, which we plan to launch on January 1st, 2008. Registration on the wiki is open to all.”

More information from Chris Bailey, ICT Hub FOSS in the VCS project, chrisbailey@socialrights.org

Tools and Technologies

Remote Control Software for all

Jim Druce, JADe

Remote support is always a challenge; as a support company we've always been on the lookout for good tools which help to facilitate this important process and for the last 3 years we've been successfully using UltraVNC.

UltraVNC is powerful, easy to use and free software that can display the screen of another computer (via Internet or network) on your own screen and allows you to use your mouse and keyboard to control the other PC remotely. It means that you can work on a remote computer, as if you were sitting in front of it, right from your current location. What makes this tool in our opinion a better player is that it's completely free of charge!

If you provide computer support, you can quickly access your customer's computers from anywhere in the world and resolve helpdesk issues remotely. With add-ons like SingleClick our customers don't even have to pre-install software or execute complex procedures to get remote helpdesk support. This has proved particularly important for us in ensuring that we do not need deploy any software onto the actual machines to gain access.

Not only are we using this tool extensively for our support operation but one of our other key clients, an accountancy firm, also now uses this toolset for their day to day business. They needed to be able to remote onto their customer machines in this instance to review Sage Accounting Data. In the past this was a painful process which involved replicating Sage backup files from the client to their own environment – as you can imagine this was not only very time consuming but also extremely cumbersome. Now with UltraVNC in use they are able to gain access to the Sage environment within 5–10 minutes and review the required data. So it's not just for IT support as many other uses can be applied to this useful product.

Key features include file transfer, optional encryption plug-ins, MS Logon, chat, viewer toolbar, Java Viewer with File Transfer, as well as Autoscaling and ServerSideScaling. It also has multiple monitor support, repeater/proxy-support, auto-reconnection, good performance and tons of other functionalities.

Add-ons include Repeater (to use UltraVNC ion a network behind a NAT router), SingleClick and NATtoNAT connectors (for connections between UltraVNC viewer and server behind NAT routers

without any router modification.), that help you to easily handle the most complex connection situations.

UltraVNC runs under Windows operating systems from 95 to Vista. Its embedded JavaViewer allows you to connect (and make file transfers) from a simple web browser on any operating system supporting Java (Linux, Mac OS...) to an UltraVNC server.

More information and downloads from <http://www.uvnc.com/>

Jim Druce, Operations Manager, JADe, jim.druce@jadegroup.co.uk

JADe is an IT consultancy providing quality, cost-effective IT services to a number of industry sectors. www.jadegroup.co.uk

Low cost back ups

A recent thread on UKRiders discussed the various merits of low-cost back up solutions from CDRs, memory sticks, external hard drives to online services. It also covered a number of back-up software applications. Consensus seemed to be that CDRs, DVDRs, memory sticks etc were not a good idea as they can fail, data is not secure, the stick can disappear or break easily. The emergence of reasonably priced online backups or use of open source applications to back up to external (off the network and site) drives was the way forward. Excluding human intervention in the process is also urged! The following is a selection of possible tools and services:

- **Rsync** – open source incremental file transfer utility for Linux – <http://samba.anu.edu.au/rsync/>
- **DeltaCopy** – Windows version of Rsync – www.aboutmyip.com/AboutMyXApp/DeltaCopy.jsp
- **Bacula** – network back up for Linux, Mac, Unix and Windows – “It comes by night and sucks the vital essence from your computers” – www.bacula.org
- **SyncToy** – copying, moving, and synchronization of different directories free download for XP, and Vista – <http://tinyurl.com/7dlru>

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Tools and Technologies – continued

- **Mozy.com** – online back-up, costing \$3.95 for a licence per month then \$0.50 per Gb – <http://mozy.com/>
- **CWrsync** – another Windows version of rsync and CygWin. – <http://tinyurl.com/2gae3>
- **Backup Direct** – online backup costing around £10/month ex VAT for up to 5GB data that after the initial back up (which can take a very long time) performs a daily incremental backup. The back up will go back 90 days and they guarantee

that you will always have the last/latest version of any document sent to the back up.
www.backupdirect.net

- **JungleDisk** – reasonably priced online backup (for a 6Gb backup, backing up weekly, the ongoing cost comes out at under £2/month) using Amazon.com's distributed network – <http://www.jungledisk.com>

Thanks to everyone who contributed to that thread.

One Liners

- Paul Jefford asks what makes a good Circuit Rider – <http://cambscircuitrider.blogspot.com/2007/10/day-in-life-of-circuit-rider.html>
- OpenOffice Portable – a 70Mb download which you can take with you and run OpenOffice applications anywhere! Very cool. – http://portableapps.com/apps/office/openoffice_portable
- IBM joins the OpenOffice.org community – http://www.openoffice.org/press/ibm_press_release.html
- Commoncraft adds a plain English guide to Google Docs – <http://www.commoncraft.com/video-googledocs>
- The new CharityComms site is now live at www.charitycomms.org.uk
- Steve Wozniak (the Apple founder) professing his undying 'love' of the FOSS movement – <http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,2188211,00.asp>
- Ian Ryder believes that the death knell for the upgraded PC is about to sound – <http://www.vnunet.com/crn/analysis/2199784/death-knell-upgraded-pc-3501393>
- Gavin Clabaugh examines how Skype can be used by SOBs (Small Organisations and Businesses!) – <http://tinyurl.com/2udwz2>

ICT Hub Links

ICT Hub – www.icthub.org.uk

ICT Hub Knowledgebase – www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk

ICT Hub Suppliers Directory – <http://directory.icthub.org.uk>

Circuit Rider of the Month

Dave Greenhalgh

Manager, Social Enterprise development – ICT
Cumbria CVS

Life after IT?

In my previous career, I worked at IBM in Hampshire for 28 years, supporting 'proper' computers – big mainframes. Ours had a couple of thousand users and we had around 200 support staff. My final job there was training programmers and providing their technical support. I spent quite some time 'tuning up' and testing the systems, and eventually started doing this for IBM customers, spending in total around 10 years doing technical consultancy all over the UK and beyond.

Early retirement in 2002 left me looking for something to do, and an advert from EdenCVS caught my eye. The project was 18 months working in the Eden area (around Penrith in Cumbria) doing free IT support and advice. The term Circuit Rider wasn't in use, but it was that sort of job.

I started by meeting a number of the local organisations, and discussing their IT challenges. As I had half expected, most were 'getting by' with IT with little or no dedicated support, budgets or strategies. (Unfortunately, this is still common in the sector, which is why I am such a strong advocate of the Net:gain programme.)

I also found, as others have, that helping groups with a few 'quick wins' helped them to build confidence, and that this often led to more strategic activity. We had no track record of IT support from EdenCVS, and I was very flattered that groups quickly started calling for support. Many wanted help with databases or websites, and I organised inexpensive 'sector specific' training, which went down well.

The project finished and the CVS found money to keep me on 'for a while' (I'm still here!). The next big project was internal – the five Cumbria CVSs and Voluntary Action Cumbria wanted to work more closely together, and asked me to investigate how IT could help. I reported back that a joint system, which would include a shared database, centralised servers, together with better email facilities, would help us improve our service delivery, and reduce ongoing costs. This plan was accepted and the ChangeUp funded work began. We looked at a number of multi-site set-ups, and eventually decided on outsourcing to Carlisle City Council. Around this time, the CVS' in Cumbria decided that a full merger could be advantageous, and started working towards this. – it is now in place as of 1st October.

We had also selected the ThankQ CRM database system from Esit (www.esit.co.uk/products/thankq.php), and this has been implemented as part of this project. Now, a couple of years later, it's all running well, with the database in use at all locations.

Amongst all this, I have also carried on supporting a few local groups on a chargeable basis. A key organisation has been

the Cumbria Deaf Association, (www.cumbriadeaf.co.uk) where I have developed a new network, and mostly manage their system remotely from our Eden office.

Our next CVS project is reflected in my current job title – Manager Social Enterprise development – ICT. We are planning a start-up social enterprise to build on the experience so far, initially providing a limited combination of direct IT support (me!), and sub contracted support through a number of local organisations or individuals. Watch this space for a launch date...

A few conclusions:

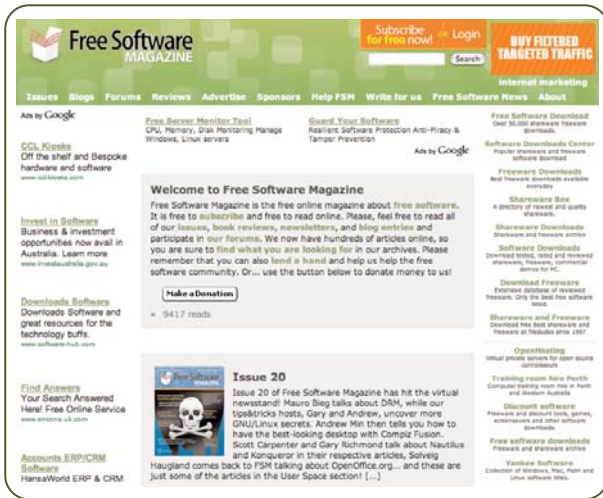
- The sector needs 'trustworthy' advice and support – certified 'Circuit Riders' should help.
- Building relationships with groups with 'quick wins' (fix the printer, specify/set up a new machine, etc.) works wonders.
- Avoid technotalk (I have trouble here!).
- Talk to the Chief Officers/Trustees whenever possible – whoever makes the real decisions.
- Most users don't want to be IT slaves. They just want the computer to work, like the phone and the kettle. This needs management, a budget, and planning. Net:gain and Circuit Riders can help.
- Cars need servicing – most people accept this, but don't service' their computers – another mind set change needed, that unfortunately only happens *after* the Virus problem.
- Back up (and recovery testing) is only ever done after data is lost.
- Sustainable is a difficult word if found in the same sentence as IT support.
- IT has become ICT, which is opening up a whole new world.
- The sector has become (almost) totally dependent on computers but doesn't know it yet (try talking about disaster recovery to organisations)
- Many users don't know (or understand) just how much help is around – particularly such things as the ICT Hub 'products' – Knowledgebase, publications, events etc. – we can help by 'translating' the techie stuff, and signposting to the excellent material that is there.
- Explain that you don't know *everything* – some people get quite the opposite impression!

The next step is to drum up enough business to provide a sustainable support agency in Cumbria. It's not going to be easy, but we are going to try.

And finally, thanks to all who have helped me over the last few years, too many to name.

Dave Greenhalgh, DaveG@cumbriacvs.org.uk

FOSS magazines & newsletters



Free Software Magazine –
www.freesoftwaremagazine.com

Tectonic –
www.tectonic.co.za

Free Software Daily –
www.fsdaily.com

What is The Linux Vault?



The Linux Vault is a new wiki project founded with the mission of creating a centralized GNU/Linux information website. It has just been created, so we are begging everybody to take part of it and make it the place for writing guides, how-tos, configurations, administration tips, tricks, tweaks or whatever else related to the GNU/Linux system.

See www.thelinuxvault.net/wiki/Main_Page

Some new articles on the Knowledgebase

Second Life and the Voluntary Sector – Pauline Woolley explores what Second Life is, why the sector should be interested, how it can be used, training, costs, time, accessibility issues and problems.
<http://www.ictubknowledgebase.org.uk/secondlife>

Choosing a CMS That's Right For You – Simon Pavitt examines what one is, what the benefits are of having one and how to choose between what's on offer.
<http://www.ictubknowledgebase.org.uk/choosingacms>

Making the Most of Your Multimedia Content – Simon Fairway of Juvimedia discusses how Third Sector organisations can make best use of their multimedia content, by integrating it into fundraising, advocacy, and feedback campaigns.
<http://www.ictubknowledgebase.org.uk/integratingmultimediacontent>

Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing 2007

Aba Maison from Lasa along with over 1400 women from 22 different countries attended the recent Grace Hopper Celebration (GHC) in Orlando, Florida. For many, including Aba, it was the first time they'd attended GHC and although initially feeling sceptical about going, and that she'd be a complete fish out of water at an event aimed at seriously hard core techies and academics, she was very pleasantly surprised...

The Anita Borg Institute for Women (<http://anitaborg.org>) organisers of the conference aims to increase both the impact of women on all aspects of technology, and the positive impact of technology on the world's women.

The conference objectives were to:

- explore global issues and opportunities to make a diff through technology
- meet women using technology to create a positive impact
- provide a network for technologists interested in changes that benefit the world
- provide a sense of possibility and excitement for using technology to impact issues about which the attendees were passionate.

Lofty ambitions but someone's gotta have 'em... and from my point of view they were met.

The main highlight for me, the pre-conference Techleaders event, was informative and very well organised. A number of excellent speakers gave examples of how they've used technology to solve problems and make a global social impact:

- Anuradha Vittachi, a writer involved in social media from a young age, talked about how she co founded OneWorld.net (www.OneWorld.net). A very early social networking tool, OneWorld.net was founded in 1992 (two years before UNICEF got email, and when most agencies had never heard of the Web!). The tool enabled poor communities to exchange information in their own languages. She gave several examples of how the tool had benefited poor communities, including that of a woman in India whose child had a rare blood type. The mother was very concerned the child was going to die – the hospital could not afford to acquire the blood. A request was posted on OneWorld's media centre, burst across all the community media centres in the area, and was read the next day by a man who posted back that he had the same rare blood type. He offered his blood to save mother and child. None of this would have been possible without access to information – an open knowledge network provided by the OneWorld.net technology tool.
- Mari Kuraishi, the founder of global giving (www.globalgiving.com/), described herself as an “accidental entrepreneur / social change innovator”. She gave up a successful career at the World Bank to set up a project that connects people with great ideas about combating poverty with people who have the financial resources (however small) to help. Ordinary people get to contribute to the success of projects that have a real impact (e.g. micro credit schemes)
- Bernadine Dias works for Techbridge World (www.techbridgeworld.org/) an educational program of Carnegie Mellon University. She gave an extremely entertaining and inspiring talk about the program's work to find innovating means of developing and disseminating suitable and sustainable technology for empowering developing communities. (Apparently her vision started at the age of 10 – she was more interested in finding ways to propel her dolls to school using some kind of chemical chain reaction than merely carrying them to school like her older sister)

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- Jensine Larsen of WorldPulse Magazine (www.worldpulsemagazine.com/) is using Web 2.0 technologies to help women connect with each other globally and tell their stories in their own words. For example, women living under oppressive regimes in Afghanistan and Burma have been able to report the reality of what's going on in those countries using their mobile phones and the multi media blogging tools available via WorldPulse Magazine website
- Paula Goldman of the Imagining Ourselves Project, International Museum of Women (<http://imaginingourselves.imow.org/pb/Welcome.aspx>) described herself as an “accidental technologist”. Paula spent her 20s travelling around the world doing various projects including reconciliation work in post-war Bosnia, and working with women survivors of domestic violence in India. She co founded the Imagining Ourselves Project to give women around the world a medium to tell their stories through art to inspire other young women into action.

Like all technical conferences there was the odd technical glitch ... However, it was a real coup to see Second Life being used in a very practical way (I've had my doubts about the usefulness of this tool so it was great to have my mind changed...). Anuradha Vittachi (OneWorld.net and OneWorld UK) participated in the conference very effectively using Second Life and her conference address went very smoothly. As an environmentalist looking to minimise her carbon footprint Anuradha felt she couldn't justify flying from the UK to speak at the event. By using Second Life she was not only speak at the conference but also to engage in a two way interaction with the attendees and do live demonstrations of the points she was illustrating. One Climate Island (<http://oneclimate.net/virtual-meeting?island.x=71&island.y=6>) – explains how OneWorld.net uses Second Life for virtual meetings.

Other conference highlights for me included:

- Being in the presence of so many other women involved in technology (seriously clever people!) who are working in technologies I'd never even heard of. All were interested in using their technical skills to bridge social divides and create positive social change.
- Hearing stories from different women (including the speakers) of how they got into technology and the projects they're currently involved in.
- Finding out that the big technology players (e.g. Google, Yahoo, IBM, Intel) are interested in projects that help create social change and are supporting / sponsoring women within their companies to deliver outreach projects and programs to help achieve this.
- Getting some great tips on networking (not my forte! But apparently the ability to be good at it isn't genetically inherited – it's a skill and just takes practice which is encouraging).
- Presentation on website accessibility – by Shawn Lawton Henry of the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium). Informative, interesting, interactive and practical. Presentation available at www.w3.org/WAI/presentations.
- Sessions on mentoring (workplace mentoring, insights into mentor / mentee (is this a word? Ed.) relationships.
- Entrepreneurship the fundamentals and fun of ideas generation – fun tools for generating project ideas.

All in all I found the pre conference Techleaders event and the conference itself very positive experiences despite the early starts, late finishes, and the cultural wasteland that is the Walt Disney resort (what can I say ... I must have been born old – even the vast Disney machine didn't manage to make me get in touch with my inner child!).

With my new and improved networking skills I also met Jan Peters from BCS (British Computer Society) who is hoping to run a similar conference in the UK. Anita Borg Institute are also bringing a conference to Brighton UK in Feb 2009. So with any luck a reduction in *my* carbon footprint is imminent.

It would also be great to see more women involved in Circuit Riding so those of you out there why not get along to next year's circuit riding conference and see if we can't get something going!

In the mean time check out the resources and information at www.ghc.org and the links in this article and be inspired.

Round-Up's Blog Corner

Following on from featuring Miles Maier's London Regional Champion blog in issue 1, this month we focus on some of the blogs being written by some of the other ICT Hub Regional Champions.



South East –
<http://scipmark.blogspot.com>
(SCIP) Mark Walker looks at marketing, social enterprise and other ICT issues from the seaside in Brighton.



West Midlands –
<http://ictandcakes.org.uk>
Jackie Carey blogs from the Border country whilst 'promoting ICT in the voluntary and community sector. With cakes.'



Yorkshire and Humberside –
<http://yhictchampion.wordpress.com>
Colin Harrison at Electroville's (great company name) comprehensive and regularly updated ICT cornucopia.



East Midlands –
<http://item3.org.uk>
item3 (Promoting IT in the East Midlands 3rd Sector) is Tony Okotie from High Peaks CVS's regionally-focused blog.



Watford Gap's Travels –
<http://watfordgap.wordpress.com>
Paul Webster (the Champs Champ) takes to the rails and pulls the whole Regional Champions project together (and blogs when not stranded in out of the way railway stations).

If you would like to be featured as a Circuit Rider of the Month (there is no greater honour) just write 500–750 words covering stuff like name, organisation, contact email, what your organisation does, what your job role is, how you got into circuit riding (or VCS IT support and development), tips for new Riders, any cool tools or website – and any other pearls of wisdom you wish to impart to the world. Email to me at iruneckles@lasa.org.uk

Thanks to all the contributors including those on various mailing lists whose wisdom and wit we have shamelessly plundered.

Round-Up is delivered by Lasas for the ICT Hub (www.ictHub.org.uk), a partnership of national voluntary and community organisations that provide services to help organisations in the voluntary and community sector benefit from ICT.

Cartoon by Phil Evans. Design by Third Column.



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