

GUDEC 2007



GUADDEC

UK Candidature

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Introduction

GNOME-UK is a growing community of people in the UK interested in promoting and developing the GNOME desktop environment.

GNOME-UK started with the creation of the mailing list just over 3 years ago, and since then we now have a regularly updated website, and an active IRC channel. We have also organised several stands at various Linux and Free Software events, most notably the GNOME stand at the London LinuxWorld Expo for the past few years. This year we were the first group to make use of the Foundation funded GNOME Event Box, which proved immensely useful and worthwhile. We also sold a number of GNOME t-shirts, the proceeds of which went to the Foundation.



For some time we have wanted to hold a GNOME event in the UK, to bring together users and developers to promote the continued growth in development and use of Free Software in the UK. We recently organised a successful informal gathering to celebrate the release of GNOME 2.14, which served to bring the community closer and strengthen the community spirit.

Support

When the call for GUADEC 2007 bids came, it was suggested on our mailing list that we might like to enter our own bid. From the initial e-mail, we received a lot of support from both GNOME users and developers, and also other members of the Free Software community in the UK, who would all like to see the event hosted here. We have had nearly forty individuals, from prominent developers to ordinary users who have put their name forward in support of the bid. See the Supporting Individuals section for a full list.

We also had the support of non-profit Free Software organisations, such as OpenAdvantage, as well as backing from commercial organisations, such as OpenedHand. We also had offers of help from people within the Linux magazine press.

Location

Birmingham

Birmingham is a city and metropolitan borough in the English West Midlands. Generally regarded as England's "second city", it is the largest of England's core cities. The city's reputation was forged as the powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, a fact which led to Birmingham being known as "the workshop of the world". To this day over a quarter of the UK's exports originate in the greater Birmingham area. Birmingham is twinned with several cities, including the European cities of Frankfurt (Germany), Milan (Italy), and Lyon (France).

The City of Birmingham has a population of 992,400 (2004 estimate). It forms part of the larger West Midlands conurbation, which has a population of

2,284,093 (2001 census) and includes several neighbouring towns and cities, such as Solihull, Wolverhampton and the towns of the Black Country.



St. Martins, Birmingham (Photo: Brenda Burrell; cc-by-sa)

The UCE (University of Central England – <http://www.uce.ac.uk/>) is based in Birmingham, and was investigated as a possible venue. The UCE is home to the Birmingham Conservatoire faculty

(<http://www.conservatoire.uce.ac.uk/>); a music school that has plenty of facilities which include a large 500 seat lecture theatre, a 154 seat recital hall, a 140 seat lecture theatre, a flexible arena foyer space capable of accommodating 100 people, and a couple of smaller class/practice rooms which can accommodate around 50 people. The Conservatoire would be booked in more or less its entirety, so the whole event would be self contained. The Conservatoire is located right in the centre of Birmingham a small walk from the 3 main railway stations (New Street, Snow Hill, and Moor Street), and main bus routes. The central location means that all the entertainments of Birmingham are within easy reach, from the Symphony Hall, NIA, and Rep Theatre and Brindley Place across the road, to the upmarket Mailbox a short walk along the canal, and the Chinese quarter and Jewellery quarter both within easy walking distance.

Local Interest in FOSS

The West Midlands has three local LUGs; Birmingham, Wolves and Coventry. All three LUGs hold regular meetings and have a dedicated membership from which to draw volunteers.

There is a growing ecosystem of FOSS companies in the West Midlands, and the premier UK FOSS event LugRadioLive is in nearby Wolverhampton.

Birmingham is the base of several companies and organisations involved in FOSS, including OpenAdvantage (<http://www.openadvantage.org/>), a non-governmental organisation funded by the Regional Development Agency to assist local business in adopting Free and Open Source solutions.

Estimates vary but there are roughly 3000 IT based business in the West Midlands of which as least a third have some interest in FOSS. There are regular seminars and training courses held by OpenAdvantage and other projects such as iCentrum, Cercia and WMITA which are well attended and demonstrate the interest in FOSS within the local IT community.

The MOST project (<http://www.most.org.uk/>) are part of BVSC (Birmingham Voluntary Services Council) are funded to to improve the IT infrastructure of the voluntary sector using FOSS. They have rolled out a number of GNOME desktops to voluntary groups around the region.

As part of the Open Source Academy



(<http://www.opensourceacademy.org.uk/>), a project funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Birmingham City Council have just rolled out a Linux desktop throughout their public libraries, and are planning more Linux desktop projects.

Aston Pride is the 10-year regeneration programme that was launched in 2001 to improve the local area (Aston is a part of Birmingham). The SACCA centre is part of the Aston Pride programme and has recently rolled out an IT training suite using FOSS with the client machines running GNOME.

Clockwork Software, a local software solutions company, have successfully rolled out a large desktop installation for a client (over 400 depots across the UK), and use Debian and GNOME.

A recent project to study the West Midlands IT business ecosystem is starting with a list of 5000 business, however practical experience from projects such as OpenAdvantage, iCentrum, and WMITA suggest a more realistic figure around 3000. OpenAdvantage have helped over 1000 business with interest in FOSS through seminars (700+), direct assistance (200+) and training (125+) since 2004.

The BCC's original plan, based on user acceptance testing between Windows XP, GNOME, KDE, and OS X, was to roll out a GNOME based desktop. Last minute hitches with support and technical issues prompted a switch to KDE.

Travel and Accommodation

Travel

Due in part to its central location in England, Birmingham is a major transport hub on the motorway, rail, and canal networks. Local public transport is by bus,

local train and tram (the Midland Metro light railway system between the city centre and Wolverhampton). The number 11A and 11C outer circle bus routes are the longest urban bus routes in Europe. The city's main station, Birmingham New Street, is at the centre of the national rail network, whilst Birmingham International railway station serves Birmingham International Airport which has flights to cities across Europe and several Asian and North American destinations.

Accommodation

There is wide variety of accommodation available in central Birmingham. A particular focus for the GNOME-UK organising group is the provision of low cost accommodation. Both the UCE and Aston university have city centre student accommodation in walking distance of the Conservatoire that would be available out of term time, and Birmingham University has a large campus a convenient train or bus journey from the centre.

Being an international city, there are of course many youth hostels and hotels available to stay in if people would prefer.

Dates

The current availability for the Conservatoire is for the UCE Summer holidays, which runs from Saturday 23rd June to Monday 17th September. Some dates in the summer term will be booked for recitals over the next few months which we may need to work around. As with previous years, we would run from a Saturday to Thursday, and the provisional plan would be for Saturday 30th June to Thursday 6th July 2007.

Conclusion

The FOSS community in the UK is growing from strength to strength each year. We feel that hosting GUADEC in the UK would be a great benefit to promoting the Free and Open Source software ideas, and encourage the growth of the sense of community that is so important to Free Software.

References

GNOME-UK	http://www.uk.gnome.org/
OpenedHand	http://www.o-hand.com
OpenAdvantage	http://www.openadvantage.org
Birmingham (Wikipedia)	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham
UCE	http://www.uce.ac.uk/
Conservatoire	http://www.conservatoire.uce.ac.uk/
Birmingham International	http://www.bhx.co.uk/
MOST	http://www.most.org.uk/
Open Source Academy	http://www.opensourceacademy.org.uk/

Supporting Individuals

Aidan Delaney, Alex Hudson, Andrew Sobala, Bastien Nocera, Chris Lord, Crispin Flowerday, Daniel Berrange, David Barr, Davyd Madeley, Emmanuele Bassi, Iain Holmes, James Ogle, Jamie McCracken, John Levin, Jon Masters, Jonathan Cooper, Karl Lattimer, Martyn Russell, Matthew Allum, Matthew East, Matthew Walton, Mel McWeeney, Michael Meeks, Michael Wood, Milen Dzhumerov, Nicholas Skehin, Paul Cooper, Pete Ryland, Rob Taylor, Ross Burton, Scott Murphy, Seb Payne, Simon Elliott, Simon Howard, Thomas Wood, Zaheer Merali

Signed

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