

Lessons learned from one of New Zealand's most challenging civil engineering projects: rebuilding the earthquake damaged pipes, roads, bridges and retaining walls in the city of Christchurch 2011 - 2016.

The genesis of SCIRT – a new era in disaster recovery

Story: The Genesis of SCIRT

Theme: The SCIRT Model

A document which describes the formation of SCIRT.

This document has been provided as an example of a tool that might be useful for other organisations undertaking complex disaster recovery or infrastructure rebuild programmes.

For more information about this document, visit www.scirtlearninglegacy.org.nz

















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The genesis of SCIRT – new era in disaster recovery

At the beginning, there was an alliance. Multiple contractors collaborated with government agencies for the greater good of an earthquake-battered community craving a resilient rebuilt city. It was the genesis of SCIRT.



The ups and downs of post-earthquake Christchurch in 2011.

On September 4, 2010, as darkness still engulfed myriad towns, the first earthquake wave rolled across the Canterbury Plains west of Christchurch, liquefying land and breaking buildings but sparing lives.

The South Island's largest city was left reeling, badly bruised but still standing after the 7.1-magnitude quake and numerous aftershocks.

Shocked and surprised, the Christchurch City Council (CCC) swung into action. Within weeks, four design and build teams engaged via a competitive tender process were focused on infrastructure repairs. Working in four geographically isolated areas of the city, they were responsible for reinstating public horizontal infrastructure.

Civil contractors City Care, Downer, Fulton Hogan and a Fletcher Construction-McConnell Dowell Constructors joint venture were involved in the rebuild. Each partnered with a design consultancy.

Parts of the city were pummeled and swamped in liquefaction but many areas escaped major damage. Targeted repairs were overseen and sequenced by the council via the Infrastructure Rebuild Management Office (IRMO), which was hastily established in

September 2010. The objectives were clear: the speedy reinstatement of critical services – water and sewerage systems to allow people to stay in their homes – and road clearance to enable access to damaged areas.

Up to 30 council staff banded together to manage the IRMO rebuild programme. IRMO was responsible for management and finance while the contractors oversaw the design, construction, communication, programming, procurement, and project administration. Contracts were signed in December 2010 and the works go-ahead was signalled in February 2011.

IRMO would continue in the oversight role until the end of August 2011.

Temblor and tragedy

Design work was well under way and the rebuild had just started when the fatal 6.3-magnitude earthquake thundered through Christchurch on February 22, 2011, leaving 185 people dead and escalating the damage to infrastructure by an order of magnitude.

The Government hurriedly stepped in, declaring a state of emergency.

Stunned at the level of damage, the council and the John Key-led government recognised the IRMO repair arrangement was no longer viable for a shattered city. IRMO did not have the capacity or the capability to manage the vastly increased workload born out of the inconceivable citywide damage. The rebuild quickly morphed into a multi-faceted, massive task beyond the usual jurisdictions. And the government took an extraordinarily ambitious move into an interventionist model.

Facing a rebuild of immense scale and scope, the government sought value for money, a quick, effective





and flexible response, and probity.

The destructive nature of the February quakes and bruising aftershocks required a high-level, innovative solution: a delivery vehicle capable of managing the huge scale and complexity of the infrastructure rebuild; an instant organisation; an entity that came to be named SCIRT (Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team).

Mr Perry goes to Wellington

In early March, a senior construction industry figure, Bill Perry, made representations to the government via then Transport Minister Steven Joyce and Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee and to the city council, suggesting there was an innovative way to tackle the horizontal infrastructure rebuild with an unusual alliance of government agencies and multiple contractors. A powerful blend of public agencies and private businesses could best deal with the massive escalation in the scope of work for a rebuild focused on speed and certainty, given the large-scale damage and ongoing seismic risk as aftershocks rattled the region.

A shared programme of multiple projects was high on Perry's agenda. Under the proposal, the contractors mobilised by IRMO were best placed to continue the work under a new model centred on an unlikely alliance of competitors.

Perry believed a progressive approach was vital to tackle one of New Zealand's largest and most complex civil engineering programmes, expected to cost more than \$2 billion.

Damaged assets were owned by different parties, necessitating a "whole of government" response. And the scope of work required a multi-party team; put simply, the rebuild was too big for a single business.

Could this be achieved in an unlikely alliance agreement? Could traditional competitors become collaborators? Which roles would each government entity and contractor play? Could the collaborators share their resources?

The government needed reassurance that the suggested alliance could best meet the needs of a crippled city.

After Perry's visit in March, it turned to the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) for advice, recognising its extensive experience with collaborative contracts.

As the public clamour grew for a rapid response and the need to quickly secure the right course of action became clear, the agency supported a proposed alliance of contractors and government stakeholders.

However, the debate was heating up as individual contractors jostled for a position in the rebuild line-up and the government sought guidance: Who might the players be? How might a commercial document be pulled together? Could commercial tension find the right balance in economic reality?

The IRMO response had illustrated the case that competing companies could work collaboratively. Maintenance teams and contractors were already united in Christchurch, albeit in complementary roles.

SCIRT Board member Graham Darlow recalled that the collaborative relationship that would evolve into SCIRT had its genesis at a meeting at a cafe in Wellington on March 18, 2011.

The Fletcher Construction chief executive had been joined at the meeting by two fellow CEOs, Bill Perry (Fulton Hogan) and Cos Bruyn (Downer), and NZTA representative Colin Crampton.



Uniting force Bill Perry.





An unlikely alliance

After further discussions between the government and the CCC – and acting on NZTA advice – it was decided to forge ahead with an infrastructure rebuild alliance. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was developed by CCC and a Hamilton-based team of NZTA representatives and consultants.

Meanwhile, on March 29, 2011, the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) was established under the State Sector Act 1988 by way of an order in council. Together with the CCC and NZTA, CERA would become one of the three "owner participants" (OPs) in the alliance.

On April 12, the government introduced the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Bill, outlining measures to enable post-quake response and recovery. The bill passed into law on April 19. The regulatory road was being cleared for the rebuild.

On April 15, 2011, the Christchurch Infrastructure Alliance Request for Proposal was released, detailing a proposal for the OPs to enter into an alliance with five non-owner participants (NOPs): City Care, Downer, Fletcher Construction, Fulton Hogan and McConnell Dowell. This RFP required a response by noon, April 21. Fortunately, the NOPs were already well advanced with their proposal.

Colin Crampton, NZTA general manager of highways and network operations at the time, joined forces with the city council's then head of capital programme delivery, Kevin Locke, to drive through the creation of the unusual and previously untried form of alliance. Both men understood the power of collaborative working relationships.

Following on from the RFP and the NOPs proposal, the pair and a supporting cast drawn from all the organisations involved – operating from a makeshift office at McLeans Island on the outskirts of Christchurch – put together a proposal for the Initial Alliance Agreement (IAA); basically, an agreement to reach an agreement.

That proposal was formally accepted by the government and the council and a plan was in place by

the start of May. Amid quakes and much debate, it took a remarkably short six weeks of preparation.

All on board

A board was formed as the IAA was negotiated.

By late April, the SCIRT Board was in place, comprising a representative from each of the eight participant organisations. The board included Onno Mulder, chief executive, City Care; Roger McRae, general manager, McConnell Dowell Constructors; Bill Perry, chief executive, Fulton Hogan; Cos Bruyn, chief executive, Downer; Graham Darlow, chief executive, Fletcher Construction; Colin Crampton, NZTA; Kevin Locke, CCC; and Bruce McLean, CERA.

McRae said the board was put together "pretty quickly" while Darlow recalled that such strong candidates made the board choices easier.

Darlow said Perry brought an opinionated voice to the board table that "both encouraged and provoked many of the key decisions", while Crampton played a "very large part in establishing SCIRT, obtaining ministerial approvals, establishing the CGG (Client Governance Group), creating budgets and working behind the scene" to gain alignment among the NOPs.



Post-disaster Christchurch: Fitzgerald Avenue.

Crampton called in Australian facilitation group Alchimie to help establish the governance structure and culture of SCIRT. Alchimie also provided guidance on an overall delivery strategy and commercial model.

McRae said there was then "a bit of jockeying for position" at board level in establishing the NOP





commercial framework.

"However, this was quickly overcome when, in a phone call, Onno Mulder asked if there was any good reason why we should not all be equal? There was a deafening silence on the phone line in response," McRae recalled.

He also acknowledged the role of Perry, who sadly passed away in July 2011, as a "larger than life character who was a great champion of safety".

In agreement

The Initial Alliance Agreement was signed at a ceremony in Fitzgerald Avenue on May 4, as the Prime Minister, John Key, Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee, then Christchurch mayor Bob Parker and board members crowded around a jagged roadway scar on the edge of the central city.



All on board: Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee, seated left, and Christchurch mayor Bob Parker sign the Initial Alliance Agreement in Christchurch.

Scope and scale

From the start, there were competing priorities, uncertainty over the degree of infrastructure damage pending further investigation, multiple interrelationships to connect, and existing IRMO recovery teams familiar with the Christchurch landscape and the issues already in place.

The scope of repair work – limited to the council's city boundaries – included the city's sewers, water supply, drainage and roads.

It was an ambiguous scope - subject to change with ongoing seismic activity and investigation - for a

programme of hundreds of projects across four infrastructure networks. An alliance structure could enable speedy mobilisation and substantial delivery capability. Such a response would best meet community needs.

The alliance was charged with the reinstatement of state highways, local roads and water, and storm water and wastewater utility services, along with responsibility for special projects to aid access, such as bridges and wall replacement. It would be tasked with assessing damage and deciding on repairs, and then completing design and construction in a prioritised sequence of projects.

The alliance would work with all jurisdictions while ensuring a high level of collaboration and integration across the rebuild. It also would need to meet the performance and functional needs of all stakeholders and objectives relating to cost, quality, safety, time, environment and the community.

The rebuild would cover additional work outside the core scope, such as capital projects for the council, Port Hills slope stabilisation and providing assistance to other recovery programmes.

Well-established approach

The immediate priority was to appoint a general manager who could quickly power up a new organisation and oversee the huge Experienced Australian alliance manager Duncan Gibb fitted the bill and was officially in the role by May 11, in time for the initial operational board meeting. Gibb, the GM for Fulton Hogan in Queensland, left behind Australia's flood-ravaged east coast for chasm-ridden Canterbury. Queensland was awash, while Christchurch was without water infrastructure. Either way, it was choppy waters.

For Gibb, it was a surprise appointment.

"I thought it was unlikely that they would select an Australian to do something like this in New Zealand," Gibb said. "However, days after an interview, I got the call on Easter Friday, and arrived in Christchurch on May 7."





Darlow said the board initially played a "strong leadership role" before Gibb's leadership style "took over in a positive manner".

First, the board and Gibb had to come up with a plan for a team to run SCIRT.

"At that first board meeting I attended on May 11, I was effectively given a framework which was a collaborative relationship: 'we've got three clients; we've got five contractors'," Gibb recalled. "Basically, I was told, 'we want a relationship that's got competition and collaboration, so we want some competitive tension'. In short, 'we need to create a model that will do that; we need a strategy to determine a way to demonstrate value; we need to do the right work at the right time; want to drive ongoing productivity and we improvement'."

From the start, Gibb recognised the enormity of the task and the urgency of the rebuild. The construction clock was ticking.

Such a work programme had probably never been attempted before. The creation of an instant organisation was under way.

"The board explained 'we've got these objectives in the interim alliance agreement, and you've got until September 1 to deliver all of these outcomes to satisfy the clients that this is the way to respond and, at that point, we initiate an alliance agreement'," he said.

The scramble for workers began. Gibb needed names. And all would-be team members had to be able to dive straight in to the service and delivery pool.

"We had to go away and find people because we had to create an alliance team, so the delivery teams gave me a whole lot of CVs and, fortunately, I knew a lot of people," Gibb explained. "I did some interviewing, selected a management team and, effectively, started to shape what was really wanted."

By the end of May, the core Alliance Management Team (AMT) was formed, headed by Gibb. When the AMT was put together, only 15 people were working out of the Fletcher/McConnell Dowell JV offices in Sockburn, Christchurch,

Interviews were under way for the next tier and SCIRT was working with the council to bring IRMO members into the Integrated Alliance Team. Attention quickly turned to cementing relationships and determining SCIRT operations, particularly the systems, processes, and, most importantly, leadership and culture.

"We also needed to create a programme management system and procedures and we looked at what each of the contractors had and realised none of them had what we needed, so we had to design that from scratch and then put that together," Gibb explained.

By the end of May 2011, the management team had clarified strategies regarding commercial processes, assessed and selected the IT system, hardware and application providers, developed the framework of the Integrated Management System, and completed several key management plans.

In charge

"In those early months, as a leader, I was very conscious that I needed to be quite dictatorial," Gibb explained. "This is where we need to go; this is how we'll do it; failure is not acceptable.

"We knew we needed to set a couple of goals and deliver on them to show people we meant business. People understood that this is a place where stuff happens and you are expected to deliver. So I think some of those early wins and early declarations were really important."



Engineering a successful outcome: SCIRT executive general manager Duncan Gibb, 2011-2014.



Commercial success

Considerable value lay in pursuing collaborative processes, but competitive tension would also provide value for money.

To power that innovation and giant step into the unknown, Gibb also needed the right commercial model.

"We needed to develop a suite of management plans to steer how we were going to develop the delivery vehicle, and then we needed to flesh out how a commercial arrangement would work in order to achieve the required objectives and outcomes," he said.

Simply pouring all the delivery team ingredients into a construction mix was not the right recipe for success.

"Historically, with an alliance agreement, everyone's resources are all thrown into a pile and you just make something happen," Gibb explained.

"However, looking at a programme of potentially hundreds of projects, it became obvious that, in reality, we could have an integrated team set up as a corporate office function and we needed to leave the delivery vehicles in their own organisations, using their own systems and procedures to deliver the work."

While the task was huge, so was the budget.

"We thought we had to do \$2.5 billion worth of work in five years, so we needed a structure to deliver \$500 million worth of work a year."

Heart of the matter

Most New Zealand businesses did not have that high level of turnover. It was uncharted territory.

"We are going to set this up as a business; we are going to have a GM, a corporate office; a purpose-built building," Gibb said.

"It became known as the Integrated Services Team (IST). It would be the heartbeat of an organisation using resources from all the different areas to do a number of activities, and that was evident from the asset assessment to project definition to project prioritisation to the initial concept design approved by

the clients, and the transfer of detailed design to the estimating department. We would then allocate the projects out to the delivery teams."

IST filled the corporate function, navigating the everchanging road from project definition through to construction while avoiding potential potholes.

"We then looked to the delivery teams working as regional offices within the organisation to deliver the work," Gibb said.

"When you look at a Fletcher or Fulton Hogan or a Downer, they've got a corporate office and then they've got regions. So the delivery teams became the 'regions' and it was established that the IST 'corporate office' would allocate projects to the regions to then go and deliver. IST allocated projects that were fully scoped in terms of specification, drawings and budget."

Go forth and deliver

To boost the individual and collective performances of the delivery teams provided by the five NOPs, a work allocation model was developed to ensure value for money and competition between contractors.

The all-important process for the calculation of targeted out-turn costs (TOCs) for work packages and the selection of professional services was under way.

"We were creating an instant organisation. To achieve the collaboration and competition, we needed to create a mechanism whereby people were rewarded for their performance. We needed to have a means of rewarding good performance and penalising bad performance, but still encourage collaboration," Gibb said.

It was important to reward performance in the areas that were important to the owners, and establish key performance indicators (KPIs) accordingly.

"We were creating an instant organisation."

SCIRT executive general manager Duncan Gibb

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Measured response

To ensure continuous improvement, a measurement process was the next step.

"We set up a programme to measure the performance of those teams. Good performers were given a larger proportion of the work while poorer performers were given less," Gibb said. "However, there were twists. Each delivery team was paid the actual work cost, then the recovery of overheads and profit was collected at the group level and then allocated to delivery teams on the basis of the percentage of the work they performed.

"The poor performers were effectively eroding that fee when they overran their TOC. This drove stronger performers to support weaker performers to lift their performance. The stronger performers also had to keep getting better. It was a cycle of continuous improvement."

Darlow said one of the biggest early challenges for SCIRT was gaining agreement from the IRMO participants on the division of work and the way it would be allocated.

"This took a long time and guite a bit of argument but we landed on a very equitable arrangement that led to SCIRT's success," he said.

"The method used to allocate work based on performance was a masterstroke as we were able to contemporaneously uphold alliancing principles. It created a competitive tension based on performance without destroying the collaborative culture. Otherwise, the transition seemed to go very smoothly and most jobs never stopped."

McRae added that there were also challenges in transitioning from IRMO to SCIRT and wrapping the IRMO work packages into the SCIRT framework.

Strategy for success

Deciding project priority was the first step in the rebuild process.

"We needed to create a tool which had buy-in from the client so that they couldn't dispute what was happening and it would short-circuit political interference," Gibb

"The method used to allocate work based on performance was a master stroke."

SCIRT board member Graham Darlow

said. "That was really, really useful. It was a multicriteria assessment tool. We agreed on the weighting for each criteria with the clients and it included things like the environmental impacts, financial impacts, community impacts; all those sort of things that were also important, as well as the functionality of the infrastructure that we were delivering."

Team effort

Board members were committed "to making SCIRT a success".

Darlow recalled the benefits of "strong coaching" from Alchimie executive director Andrew Hutchinson and the "excellent support" of Crampton and NZTA.

Among the key steps were the establishment of the Alliance Agreement, objectives, principles, key result areas (KRAs) and KPIs.

The board wanted a strong alliance culture, recognising that was the path to high performance.

Darlow said the board played a strong hand in developing the SCIRT structure and culture via alliance culture workshops, the careful selection of a GM, designing the structure and appointing high-quality people to the Integrated Services Team (IST) and the delivery teams.

McRae added that the board joined the management team in helping to shape "a culture of all being equal and being there for the people of Christchurch".

"We have always had an open and transparent culture where issues are debated and decisions arrived at quickly," he said.

Initially referred to as the Christchurch Infrastructure



Alliance, the organisation soon became the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team.

McRae pointed out that defining the alliance team structure and composition and forming the commercial framework were the initial building blocks for SCIRT.

Noble purpose

SCIRT's "noble purpose" and "goal" were established in early workshops with the management team and board.

"To me, the secret was not about engineering; it was about the cultural development programme we put together," Gibb said.

"So I really focused on what are the key elements of the culture. How do we create a culture that is going to drive high performance in search of achieving some real objectives and goals? How do we keep people focused on achieving those goals?"

After much debate and consideration, the noble purpose was defined:

"Creating resilient infrastructure that gives people security and confidence in the future of Christchurch."

Darlow said this led on to "the establishment of the alliance principles, KRAs and KPIs".

The six key "mindsets/values" were soon in place:

- Best for communities
- Open to new ways and other perspectives
- Collectively we are stronger
- Generous with trust
- Zero harm
- · Developing our people

These were complemented by six "behaviours":

- Listening actively
- Having honest conversations
- Working together
- Having the courage to speak up
- Leading by example/walking the talk

Striving for excellence

To support higher performance, team members had to be nurtured and coached.

"As Colin Crampton said, 'we want to raise the capability in New Zealand so we don't need to keep on bringing in these Australian contractors'," Gibb recalled.

"That is why we brought on the coaches concept. We were growing and building team members while utilising this tool to drive what we wanted in terms of leadership and development within the business.

"If you select people with the right attitude, you give them clarity over the goals and objectives. If you give them the best tools you can and then train them when they need it, and then just empower them to get on and do it, and let them make some mistakes but learn, you can achieve just about anything.

"Those basic principles, we set into play, with the guiding framework and the mindsets and values and you started to see that coming out in the conversations with people. That's the recipe there."

Rules of engagement

For Gibb, the other factor in SCIRT's success was "our community engagement".

"It was really obvious when I came that the community was not being really informed very well. Government, I think, was being a bit cautious; the council was struggling to cope with the scale; everyone was struggling to cope with the scale," he said.

"We focused on being a means of communicating to the community and giving a bit of a steer on where we were going and why. They could start planning what they were doing in and around what we were doing."

By design

Amid the planning and building, a new design philosophy was in play.

"We wanted to change what was initially happening with design," Gibb said. "Under the IRMO scenario, the constructors were managing the designers. They were just latching on to a particular consultant and that

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consultant was pulling in resources from all over the world – from Australia and Auckland and whatever – so there were a whole lot of externals coming in; flying in and out, which were driving up the price.

"The worst part was that some local engineers were not working. We said 'we are not going to do that'.

"Instead, we set up an in-house design capability and managed it ourselves. We utilised resources from the IRMO teams and local consultants.

"It gave us total control over what we were doing, when we were doing it; how we were doing it. It meant we were flexible; we could react quickly to any changes."



A fresh framework for SCIRT in August 2011.

Wired for work

The new SCIRT site had been acquired by NZTA during the construction of Christchurch's southern motorway and was surplus to requirements.

By June, it was leased to SCIRT and the first temporary office was installed.

The temporary office – two Portacom units affectionately referred to as the "chicken coops" – housed 60 staff on the site where the main office would be built in Middleton. Staff – packed into the coops – worked should-to-shoulder as discussions and debate ricocheted around the building.

Building a new office took 12 weeks.

"Establishing all our systems and procedures and getting a full team together and moved in within four months really set the scene," Gibb said.

Within six months, SCIRT had fully mobilised, with an IST of more than 200 designers and 50 to 60 commercial, construction management, safety, HR,

quality and environment specialists working in a purpose-built larger office on the same site.

Focus on flexibility

A flexible approach was paramount. The extent of the damage and the level of repairs were unknown; more earthquakes were likely and funding and governance arrangements were still being put into place.

"If you look at SCIRT as a vehicle to deliver a changing scope, or changing requirements in a period of uncertainty, it was absolutely the way to go. I would do the same thing again," Gibb said.

"If something proved to be not quite right, we would just change it.

"We had the flexibility to get on and do things."

Taking delivery

Although the Alliance Agreement was not formally signed until September 22, SCIRT took over delivery of the horizontal infrastructure rebuild programme on September 1, 2011.

By September, the delivery teams – provided by each of the five NOPs – were in place and SCIRT was in full response mode.

While SCIRT continued to undertake development work, the contractors reported through existing channels to IRMO.

Under the IRMO model, contractors prepared to start construction on the receipt of concept design approval and progressed construction in parallel with detailed design. SCIRT continued this delivery model until December 2011. It targeted short-run value for money and highlighted progress to the community and this also gave SCIRT breathing space to review and prioritise other projects for inclusion in a five-year rebuild programme and plan and implement a citywide damage assessment programme.

Post-quake cordons and severely damaged red zone land all had to be factored in to programme planning.



Fit for purpose

From March 2011 to September 2011, the SCIRT Board:

- Established the five NOPS and three OPs
- Designed and agreed on the alliance model
- Configured and signed the Alliance Agreement
- Appointed an alliance coach Alchimie's Andrew Hutchinson
- Mobilised the IST
- Appointed an executive general manager Duncan Gibb
- Established the IST office Middleton, Christchurch
- Created a design team
- Established core standards and procedures
- Mobilised the five delivery teams and established their premises
- Created the alliance principles and objectives, KPIs and KRAs
- Established the alliancing culture
- Ensured several projects were started or carried forward from IRMO

Throughout the rebuild, the SCIRT Board utilised the alliance principles for decision-making. All decisions were the "best for project", which, for SCIRT, meant the "best for the people of Christchurch and New Zealand"; unanimous and upheld the alliance principles.

"It was always important to test our thinking in what was best for the people of Christchurch."

SCIRT board member Roger McRae

McRae underlined the importance of always "testing our thinking in what was best for the people of Christchurch".

For all participants and at all times, the aim was to create resilient infrastructure that gave people security and confidence in the future of Christchurch.

"I think the philosophy of doing the right work at the right time was the right approach," Gibb said.

"So community engagement, people and culture and smart systems and procedures, I think, underpinned the delivery we were able to achieve.

"After 34 years in the game, this was probably the most rewarding work I have ever done; primarily because you were seeing a very real impact on a community that was on its knees, in providing them with essential services and a robust, resilient foundation on which they could build their businesses and their lives.

"It was a fantastic experience in 'an almost experiment' in how far you can go with a high-performance team culture to drive outstanding outcomes."



The SCIRT IST team at Magdala Place.