

Information Systems Planning Group
2:00pm, Tuesday 24th April 2007
Robertson Wing Meeting Room, General Register House

Present: Dave Brownlee (chair); David Brown; Keith Dargie; Grayham Mount; Rob Mildren; Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: none

1. Staffing

1.1 It was reported that ICTB are currently looking to fill three posts with sandwich students: two Helpdesk Operator/Web Administration posts and one Applications Developer Assistant post in the Web and Applications Development team. The employment of additional sandwich students on this occasion allows ICTB to fill its current vacant posts until more long-term staffing solutions can be put in place.. Interviews for these posts will be held later in the week. It was noted that the start dates of the Helpdesk Operator posts will be staggered to avoid both one year contracts terminating at the same time next year, which will provide improved business continuity.

1.2 It was reported that there are currently one A3 and two A2 vacancies in DIU which are currently being dealt with by central resourcing and that a further B1 post, which has been vacant for six months will be advertised at the end of May 2007.

2. Progress reports

2.1 IT Infrastructure and Web & Applications Development Team

2.1.1 Keith Dargie reported that the majority of the Infrastructure team's time is now being taken up by designing and implementing the wide ranging ScotlandsPeople IT infrastructure. A systems description document has been produced as part of a range of project management documentation, which is due to be published this week. It was noted that Keith's budget provision had been agreed at the Programme Board meeting held 24 April 2007. Servers, equipment, desktop configurations and other infrastructure products will be established for the Scottish Family History Centre by the end of June. The 'handover' of the applications servers to GROS is scheduled for 2 July. A solution for storing GROS images within SFHS system has been identified and this will be implemented around 21 June. Keith explained that business planning mechanisms have been put in place to manage the ICTB workload over the next few months to ensure that staff resources will not be diverted from implementing the key ScotlandsPeople infrastructure. At this stage, it is hoped that it will not prove necessary to impose an 'embargo' on dealing with low level Helpdesk calls and RFCs.

2.1.2 Plans for the Joint Telephony Service (JTS), shared with GROS, were discussed. It was noted that the server room is now full to capacity and that Keith is due to meet with Bob Phillips to discuss the possible use of an adjacent room.

2.1.3 It was noted that recent improvements to the WRH network have generally been successful but that problems remain for a small number of WRH staff. It is hoped that the intended upgrading of the inter-buildings link may resolve these outstanding problems, which will also provide an opportunity for taking stock of overall network performance once implemented.

2.1.4 Keith reported that the arrangements that he had put in place with THUS (the suppliers of our communications links) for our account managers to 'track' progress and actions being taken for any logged support calls has proved successful to date. It was also noted that another outcome of recent discussions with THUS will result in them providing around £20k of equipment and installation work free of charge as part of the upgrade of our inter-buildings links.

2.1.5 It was reported that the Web & Applications Development team work plans will require some adjustment in regards to the scheduling and delivery of systems development output, but that this should not impact on corporate plan tasks.

2.1.6 It was further noted that Siemens and ASB are in the process of making necessary changes to the telephone switchboard in preparation for the temporary closure of the General Register House main reception area this weekend.

2.2 Digital Access Team

2.2.1 Grayham Mount reported on progress with the RAC search tool. It was explained that all Phase I images have been captured and that gaps in the register of images had been identified. A copy of this document will be supplied to John Waugh, Head of Legal Search Room and to the Legal Search Firms. It was reported that the meeting held on 17 April 2007 attended by BT and Legal Search company directors had been useful and that the need for detailed communication had been impressed upon BT. There had been a technical problem regarding storage differences, Network Attached Storage (NAS) and Storage Area Network (SAN), between ROS and NAS, but this has been resolved. It was further reported that all the sasine microfiche images would be ready for use by 25 April 2007. It was noted that the images will need to be renamed for use on Virtual Volumes as BT had used a slightly different naming convention but this renaming could be done efficiently within NAS.

Action Point: Procedure for reporting faults to BT to be developed.

2.2.2 It was reported that backlogs in digital imaging work due to staff shortages had been successfully tackled by the establishment of the Friday night backshift and that this had enabled the DIU team to image entire negative photostat volumes, for example 25 in the past week.

2.2.3 Grayham Mount explained that a new type of scanner which uses air to turn the pages in a volume is on the market and that this may be worth investigating.

2.2.4 It was reported that the DDA project objective to have a running by end March 2007 has not been completed. Although the DDA system is currently scheduled to go live in July/August 2007, ICT staff working on the DDA will be required for other scheduled work. A ICT meeting was held to discuss technical issues with

transformation software and the use of Xena transformation software was been agreed as the technical solution. There have been problems concerning use of the system by non-administrators which is being investigated and hopefully resolved soon.

2.2.5 The ORT digital imaging technician has been provided one day per week to image documents for the ScotlandsImages project until the vacant post in DIU is filled.

2.2.6 The development of a new NAS OPAC features in the Corporate Plan 2007-2008 and will be taken further with Grayham Mount and David Brown and their respective teams

2.3 Online Resources Team

2.3.1 Rob Mildren reported progress with the VR digitisation project and explained that the procurement process will run in tandem with GROS procurement for similar work. It has been agreed that all valuation rolls will be imaged in their entirety 1855-c 1950 dependent upon resources, but only inter-census years will be indexed. It was noted that the digitisation and the indexing work would be undertaken under two separate contracts. Issues concerning the creation of VR indices have been resolved by a decision to produce a simple index to act as a pointer towards consulting the images.

2.3.2 Issues concerning movement of the valuation rolls for completion of this work were discussed. It was noted that a variety of options are under consideration including the use of outside contractors working on-site within NAS, GROS, ROS or NLS accommodation, and that proper care of the records must be ensured.

2.3.3 The GSU volunteers evening shift are currently one couple down and it was suggested that the ensuing spare camera capacity might be used for the RAC project. It was noted that extra storage capacity for the RAC project has been achieved.

2.4 CALM and OPAC

2.4.1 David Brown reported that version 7.2 of Calm had been rolled out at the end of March 2007 and that performance has greatly improved since then. It was noted that the version upgrade had been carried out in conjunction with a data cleansing exercise to remove faulty entries which had inhibited re-indexing in the past.

2.4.2 No complaints from the public regarding the OPAC had recently been received but that this does not necessarily imply improved performance. It was reiterated that PRB have an objective to produce user specifications and to assist with the development of NAS OPAC in coordination with ICTB.

3. NASnet Review Technical Paper

3.1 This paper from Keith was circulated prior to the meeting, with a summary of the main conclusions and decision making outcomes provided in Appendix A. It was noted that the NASnet review was an extremely useful exercise to demonstrate the on-going assessment and development of our corporate IT systems, which would provide

particularly useful documentation for any future scrutiny by IT auditors. It was also noted that the context of the scope and purpose of this paper had been influenced by other recent NASnet and SFHS developments and the availability of the latest Microsoft VISTA operating system. It was further noted that relevant new technologies and solutions deployed in the SFHS infrastructure may also be implemented across NASnet.

3.2 The following developments, issues and enhancements were discussed:

[3.2] It was explained that no action could be taken to enable deletion of network files because this would require installation of a service pack. This would involve significant changes to our Windows XP operating system configurations and require extensive testing and resources to deploy.

[3.3] Problems regarding prompting and permissions to change passwords for network users will be resolved.

[3.4] It was explained that incorporating roaming profiles within NASnet, which would enable users to log onto any machine and use e-mail without initiating it on each desktop would have impacted detrimentally upon network performance generally. Keith explained that appropriate solutions would be investigated as part of any deployment of VISTA, which he is likely to recommend is undertaken in Autumn 2008. Guidance for users to set up e-mail on a new machine is available on *theOracle*. Keith also highlighted that he plans to introduce a new ICT 'website', which will be used to disseminate handy hints such as these via *theOracle*.

[3.5] The deployment of software patches and updates centrally is not currently possible, but will be built into the new SFHS infrastructure, with the same functionality considered for the next generation of NASnet

[3.6] A method of updating the Corporate Links centrally for all network users has been identified and will be implemented.

[4.2] It was noted that further anti-virus measures have been deployed, with further developments to improve auditing and information logging also imminent.

[4.3] Business needs for streaming media were discussed. It was agreed that this would not be incorporated into the current NASnet environment but that this functionality and capability should be incorporated to the design of the next generation of NASnet systems.

[4.4] It was reported that system policies are being implemented.

[4.5] Centrally deployed patch management will be a function of SFHS system and will subsequently be incorporated to the next generation of NASnet

[4.6] It was noted that virus checking is not currently performed at gateway level, but that implementation of this is planned.

[4.7] It was agreed that Microsoft Office Live Meeting and Enterprise (Instant) Messaging will be considered as part of the new Joint Telephony Service.

4. Information Systems Security

4.1 It was reported that there have been no security breaches and that the anti-spam software has proved very successful.

4.2 Keith explained that he plans to contact the business system 'owners' of the various NASnet systems in order to highlight their roles and responsibilities.

Clarification regarding the Electronic Ordering System was sought and it was agreed that the head of RSB should be identified as the primary owner of this system.

4.3 A customer had complained to OSB that a DVD provided from NAS had corrupted his hard-drive. The details were discussed and it was agreed that NAS should not accept liability for the damage. Keith will write to OSB to explain formally the position.

5. Matters arising from ISPG meeting of 26 January 2007

It was noted that technical work on GIS is progressing and that in-house web-hosting is scheduled for end of May 2007.

6. Any other business

6.1 Copy production at WRH

A request for a DIU unit stationed at WRH was discussed and options considered. It was agreed that no clear business advantages were perceived, whereas lack of space and health and safety concerns presented difficulties.

6.2 Helpdesk hours

Keith submitted a paper highlighting options for extending the operational hours of the Helpdesk, which has been considered by the Management Board (MB). It was decided that provision of additional staff resources could not be justified. MB would, however, be content to make some additional budget provision for planned voluntary overtime and/or enhanced mechanisms for checking systems remotely, where it was practical to use this to extend the Helpdesk levels of service. Keith will look into these possibilities and report back to the MB in due course. It was also noted that fewer Helpdesk calls had been placed due to further stabilisation of CALM over recent months.

6.3 Other

Preparation for the vacation of the Adam Dome at end April 2007 and consequent changes to staff and customer use of GRH were discussed.

7. Date of next meeting

The NAS meetings timetable schedules the next ISPG meeting for July, however it was agreed that the last week of June 2007 would be more convenient for members.

Jenny Cutts
25 April 2007