

Delivering successful services for citizens



Introduction	3	Pesticides Safety Directorate.....	52
Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency.....	4	The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	53
Assets Recovery Agency	5	Transport Scotland	54
The British Forces Post Office.....	7	Registers of Scotland.....	55
Central Science Laboratory	8	Roads Service.....	56
Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science.....	9	Scottish Court Service.....	57
Communities Scotland.....	10	Small Business Service.....	58
Criminal Records Bureau.....	11	Student Awards Agency for Scotland.....	59
Defence Bills Agency	13	Vehicle and Operator Services Agency	60
Defence Communication Services Agency	14		
Defence Estates	15		
Disability & Carers Service	16		
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.....	19		
Driving Standards Agency	21		
East Midlands Development Agency.....	24		
English Heritage	25		
The Fire Service College.....	27		
Forest Enterprise England.....	29		
Forest Research.....	30		
Government Car and Despatch Agency.....	31		
Highways Agency.....	32		
HM Courts Service.....	34		
HM Prison Service	35		
Jobcentre Plus	36		
Land Registry	37		
Met Office.....	38		
The National Archives	40		
National Criminal Intelligence Service	41		
National Savings & Investments	42		
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	44		
Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)	45		
OGCbuying.solutions.....	46		
One NorthEast	47		
Ordnance Survey	48		
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland	50		
The Patent Office	51		

Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of our collection of success stories from members of the Agency Chief Executives' (ACE) Association. The ACE Association has been established to focus on operational delivery across Government organisations and to promote greater knowledge exchange, networking and peer learning between members. This second edition contains new examples drawn from forty-four Government organisations; the first edition published in February 2005 contained different examples from eighteen organisations.

One of our main purposes for publishing these stories is to increase awareness of effective operational delivery in Government; we firmly believe that learning from each other will lead to greater success and increase joined-up working.

The examples on the following pages illustrate how Government Executive Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies and Government Trading Funds are delivering successful services for the benefit of citizens across the United Kingdom. The range of activities is extremely wide, from revolutionising communication between relatives and friends with those serving in the British Armed Forces, to improving the method of applying for a driving test, to approving a beer dispensing system for use in a major sports stadium.

Already we are seeing more and more specific initiatives involving closer links between organisations which improve the service experience for the customer. An excellent example is Electronic Vehicle Licensing (EVL) which enables drivers to renew their tax discs online or by phone instead of presenting paper copies of their documents. The service links vehicle records held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) with motor insurance databases and Ministry of Transport (MOT) test information. EVL has been created in direct response to customer demand, demonstrating how DVLA is modernising its services to fit with changing lifestyles.

Contact details for each of the Government organisations are shown against their stories. If you would care for more information about the individual examples described, all the organisations have indicated that they would be very happy to be contacted.



Vanessa Lawrence
Director General and Chief Executive, Ordnance Survey
Chair, ACE Association
August 2006

Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency (AFPAA)



For further information:

T **01452 712612 Ext 7468**

E **dceagencysec.co@innsworth.afpaa.mod.uk**

W **<http://192.5.30.131/afpaa/>**

Over the years, the Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency (AFPAA) has had a mixed experience of partnering with industry. In an open and frank article, Peter Northen (Deputy CE AFPAA) lays out below the hard lessons learnt and what practical steps the Agency and its commercial partner have taken to construct a strong joint approach to service delivery.

AFPAA's mission is to support UK Defence Capability through the accurate payment of military personnel and provision of quality personnel administration and harmonised information services. It does this primarily through a partnering contract with EDS Defence Ltd for the delivery of personnel administration services and IT support. This is not just a simple customer-supplier relationship. EDS is an integral part of the Agency: of its current 1950 staff, 1400 are EDS. The partnering arrangement has been operating since 1998 under a contract that will expire in 2009. The relationship has run the full gamut from near collapse, leading to a substantially reconstructed contract in 2001, through to the present robust relationship.

One proof of the strength of the current partnering relationship was its ability to weather the storms of negotiating, in 2004, a massive and complex contract change (worth some £250m) for EDS to deliver the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system – the heart of one of the MOD's top Defence Modernisation programmes. JPA certainly remains very challenging – fundamental business process changes with a major IT component are notoriously difficult to pull off. But both MOD and EDS players agree that without a strong partnering relationship the project could not have achieved the great progress it has made to date. Partnering is also providing the necessary foundation for a joint restructuring of the entire Agency to support the JPA environment, including a 40% reduction in the workforce.

So why did we have fundamental problems with the partnering early on and how have they been overcome? Essentially, the original contract proved incapable of delivering a win-win for the parties and the resultant pressures from within both organisations led to behaviour patterns in the Agency that were confrontational rather than truly collaborative. Rebuilding effective partnering took a lot of time and effort and involved a number of key strands:

- a significantly revised incentivised contract with sharing of 'efficiency' savings, underpinned by open book arrangements and reinforced with a regularly reviewed Partnering Principles Document signed at very senior level;
- joint MOD/EDS management structures at all levels in AFPAA from the Management Board (the 'Joint Partnering Management Team') down, with a joint balanced scorecard and business risk registers to inform the strategic direction of the business; and
- a big emphasis on optimising behaviours (or culture) to generate genuine teamwork and joint resolution of problems, with a substantial investment of time and effort by the AFPAA senior management team to drive this home.

The overriding lesson is that partnering requires much more than an appropriate contractual framework: it must have active and effective leadership and management from the highest level. It must recognise that there are no genuinely conceivable win/lose situations, only win/win or lose/lose, and effective partnering will significantly increase the probability of achieving the win/win. Partnering words are easy but without a crystal clear concept of the actions and behaviours required throughout the enterprise, and constant reinforcement, it may well break down when put to the test. If partnering, both behaviours and processes, is not receiving very regular and significant attention it may not be functioning as well as you think.

AFPAA has not found a set of magic bullets. There is still plenty of room for improvement in its partnering relationship and there are some nasty business risks circling the Agency's canoe. But AFPAA has acquired a lot of valuable and hard won partnering experience, in day-to-day service delivery, crisis management, and in the running of a very major business change project with a significant IT component.

Assets Recovery Agency (ARA)



For further information:

T 020 7029 5700

E enquiries@ara.gsi.gov.uk

W www.assetsrecovery.gov.uk

Using the Proceeds of Crime Act

The drive to improve assets recovery came from the new *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* which, in turn, resulted from the Performance and Innovation Unit report from the Cabinet Office. It is built on powers which already existed in previous legislation such as the *Criminal Justice Act* and *Drug Trafficking and Offences Act*, but also introduced new powers such as civil recovery. It also had the effect of bringing together a series of new and extended powers to ensure that the UK could become better at recovering the proceeds of crime.

An early section of the Act states that the reduction of crime is, in general, best secured by means of criminal investigations and criminal proceedings (Section 2(6)). Whilst this relates directly to the use of the powers of the Assets Recovery Agency, it does mean that crime, and harm, reduction is set at the heart of what the policy intentions were behind the Act.

The Act provides a number of methods to fill the notional 'Tin Box'. This is a term coined to ensure that we focus on the final outcome of orders made under *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* and precursor legislation, as well as paying attention to the activity streams which drive the ultimate outcome.

Cash seizure and cash forfeiture

The key players in this activity stream are police forces, the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) officers. They are supported by police lawyers who take action for money to be detained and forfeited, and do so through civil proceedings in the Magistrates Courts. They also require assistance from police and HMRC finance officers to ensure that money forfeited is remitted to the Home Office and entered onto the Joint Asset Recovery database.

The key measures in this area of work are the volume of cash seizures where cash is initially detained; value of those seizures; the percentage of cash returned because it is legitimately found to be legitimate; and the volume and value of successful orders for forfeiture made in the Magistrates Courts which result in money being remitted to the Home Office. It is a power which can have a significant disruption impact by taking cash out of criminal economies, and has the benefit of significant publicity opportunities.

Criminal confiscation

The people involved include all police forces, HMRC, SOCA, and investigators in other agencies such as SFO (Serious Fraud Office), Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Local Authorities and ARA. Confiscation orders can be used on completion of a successful conviction calculated on the basis of the benefit of assets which have been acquired by the individual as a result of that criminality. The resulting order is a value-based order expressed as a sum of money which the individual continues to owe as a debt.

In order to achieve a successful confiscation order leading to money in the Tin Box, there needs to be good co-operation between the financial investigator in the investigating agency, the prosecutor (primarily Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Revenue and Customs Prosecution Office (RCPO)) and the Court Service. There are particular links to be made between the Crown Courts who will make the confiscation order and the Magistrates Court who will enforce the order unless it is large enough to be done by the Enforcement Task Force.

Of the orders being made at present, there are still significant numbers of orders being made under the pre *Protection of Children Act 2002* (POCA) legislation. This is because the orders made under POCA 2002 can only relate to criminality after 24 March 2003. Given the length of time cases take to come to justice, this means that there will be a significant number of cases being pursued under the precursor legislation for some time.

Money arriving in the 'Tin Box' this year from confiscation orders may well relate to orders made some years ago. This is because the legislation requires an order to consist of an agreed Time To Pay which may be two years or more.

Civil recovery

The key players in this activity stream are ARA, and the Civil Recovery Unit in Scotland.

These are the only two bodies which can make civil recovery orders. Such orders are made when confiscation or conviction has not been possible but where ARA can, on the balance of probabilities, make a case to the High Court that property held by individuals is the proceeds of unlawful conduct. The Act provides that we can only look at property acquired within 12 years prior to the start of our civil recovery action. The Act also provides that the case must demonstrate the link between the property and the criminality or the unlawful conduct which we allege.

ARA undertakes the investigation and conducts the legal work with the help of independent barristers and interim receivers who will manage property and investigate in complex cases. The Agency is dependent on good co-operation from the High Court in seeking dates for hearings of cases and the Legal Services Commission in ensuring that those individuals are entitled to civil Legal Aid receive it promptly. The Agency is also dependent on good co-operation from police forces and HMRC in, not only referring good quality cases, but also in working with us while the legal process is being undertaken.

Since the establishment of SOCA on 1 April 2006 they have become key referral partners to the Agency. Our current business plan suggests they will provide approximately one-third of the cases which we adopt in 2006–07, the further third coming from HMRC, the police service of Northern Ireland, the Met, and the remaining third coming from the other forces within England and Wales.

Our learning to date suggests that the time taken to litigate each individual case is much longer than we anticipated. This is due to the high volume of legal challenges we are experiencing (all of which have been successfully defeated to date) and the inability of the civil legal system to set a timetable and stick to it. We are in discussions with a number of bodies to attempt to speed up some of the processes and to fight off approaches for delay.

When we reach the end of a case, the judge will make an order transferring specific property into the ownership of the Agency. At this point the Agency will need to liquidate the value of the assets, which will build a potential delay into receiving money in the 'Tin Box' from the date of which the final order was made.

Taxation

The Proceeds of Crime Act provides ARA with the power to tax proceeds of unlawful conduct if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the income has arisen from unlawful activity. Tax powers used by ARA are complementary to, but not a substitute for, the powers which HMRC have to prosecute tax evaders, and make confiscation orders as a result of such prosecutions.

Key measures in this area are a number of tax assessments raised; value of tax assessments raised; and value of final tax assessments.

Taxation cases can come from referral from any law enforcement agency. Working of taxation powers is also dependent on good co-operation with HMRC in terms of the sharing of information, under the special commissioners of the Revenue who are the body which hears all appeals on cases taken by ARA.

The above notes sets out key information about the powers and the people involved in each of the activity streams. It gives some view of the complexity of the situation in which we operate, and of the fact that there is no single overarching PSA target or ministerial accountability which underpins this work. This is an area which the forthcoming PMDU review might wish to look at, as well as looking at how we encourage better inter-agency co-operation to ensure that both the harm reduction and the Tin Box targets are achieved.

The British Forces Post Office (BFPO)



For further information:

T **08457 69 79 78**

E **bfpoccu@qcis.mod.uk**

W **www.bfpo.org.uk**

British Forces Post Office Wins Major Award for the *e-bluey* Service

The British Forces Post Office (BFPO) won the technology award at the 2005 Annual UK Mail Conference and Exhibition held in November last year in competition with all of the UK's mail providers, including the Royal Mail. The awards are intended to recognise achievements and best practice within the UK mail industry, and the technology category was designed to identify new and proven technology systems that had provided either substantial cost savings or an improved service to the customer.

e-bluey is a one-to-one hybrid electronic mail system that allows the relatives and friends of British Armed Forces personnel, who are serving in hazardous, remote and far away locations on operations, exercises, and in isolated detachments, to maintain regular, personal and private contact. *e-bluey* allows users to compose a letter on a home PC or at an internet cafe, use the *e-bluey* program to process it, with the certainty that within 24 hours it will be in the hands of the recipient. Letters can be composed online or by using any popular word processing package and are sent, encrypted, to the *e-bluey* server. The sender must know the military unit and BFPO number of the recipient so that the letter can be downloaded at the appropriate location.

At the far end, the Forces Post Offices (FPOs) supporting deployed military units employ ruggedised laptops connected via satellite communications to the internet to download the encrypted files. The *e-blueys* are then printed and distributed to the recipient. The *e-bluey* system combines speed, through a specially tailored application, and privacy by utilising at each FPO an integrated Print-to-Mail printer. These print, fold and seal all *e-blueys* to maintain confidentiality until opened by the recipient.

The *e-bluey* service proved its credentials at the commencement of the war in Iraq in 2003 when BFPO was tasked with delivering over a million letters a month to and from Armed Forces personnel deployed in the Gulf area. To meet this demand, families and friends were encouraged to use the *e-bluey* service, and 200,000 *e-blueys* were delivered in the first month. Since then, the *e-bluey* web site has averaged a million visitors annually, and *e-bluey* now accounts for over 50% of the letters sent between Armed Forces personnel, and their family and friends.

e-bluey is available to all locations where the British Armed Forces are deployed: on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, West Africa, and the Balkans; on exercises such as in Canada and Kenya; and working in isolated locations such as the Falkland Islands, Brunei and Diego Garcia. This service has reduced the time to deliver correspondence to overseas locations from days to hours. The system also allows Armed Forces personnel to send *e-blueys* from their operational locations to family and friends wherever they reside, whether it be in the UK, Germany or Nepal, and soon an *e-bluey* system will be installed in Fiji. Not only has the system helped to improve the morale of Armed Forces personnel serving on operations, but it has also made a significant contribution to improving the speed and reducing the costs of moving personal mail in the Defence environment.

Central Science Laboratory (CSL)



For further information:
T **01904 462 000**
E **science@csl.gov.uk**
W **www.csl.gov.uk**

Sharing expertise across Europe brings dividends

Recent and future expansion of the European Union brings with it scientific and technical, as well as political, challenges. There is an expectation and an obligation on new Member States to comply with a wide range of EU regulations and policies, including those related to food safety and plant health. Provision has been made by the European Commission to support the technical development of new and aspiring Members through the Twinning Programme so that they can enjoy the benefits of market access and free trade.

The Twinning Programme is a mechanism by which public sector bodies in established European Member States are funded by the Commission to support capacity building of the public sector infrastructure in recently joined and candidate Member States. The objective is to share knowledge and expertise so that all Member States can benefit equally from membership of the Union.

As a centre of technical expertise on matters relating to safety of food supply and environmental sustainability, CSL is well-placed to offer support to new Member States, and the Twinning Programme offers a vehicle for so doing. As an Executive Agency of Defra with over 500 scientific staff, and a major contractor to the UK Food Standards Agency, CSL has extensive and in-depth experience of the EU Plant-health and Food Acquis, which is being made available to other Member States. CSL has been mandated by Defra to lead its interests in the Twinning Programme.

CSL has been pro-actively involved with Twinning since 2003, and successfully entered into its first project to assist the Polish Plant Protection and Seeds Service (PPSS) in 2004. Working in close collaboration with the Northern Ireland Public Sector Enterprises company 'NI-CO', the project ended in 2005, but brought many tangible benefits to CSL. Staff were offered excellent career development opportunities through the short term missions, the project brought CSL £80 000 income, and important links were formed with the PPSS, that has led to further Twinning work and given CSL in-roads into the Polish food industry, where we are currently exploring opportunities for our food quality services. We were also delighted to hear that this project has been quoted by the Deputy Minister and Chief Inspector of the SPHSIS to be 'one of the most successful PHARE projects in which State Plant Health and Seeds Inspection Service has ever been involved'.

Following this success, CSL has become involved in a further six Twinning projects in Estonia, Malta, Hungary, Lithuania, Republic of Serbia and Turkey. This programme of work is worth €6.4m total over a 3-year period and activities range from providing training and support for (a) emergency plant health measures, (b) risk assessment methods relating to plant protection products, and (c) new analytical techniques for residue and contaminant screening in food. This capacity building work fully complements our wider research and services in support of UK Government, and in doing so helps promote Defra policies throughout Europe.

CSL has recently cemented our commitment to Twinning and other EU initiatives by the creation of an International Development Team, and look forward to expanding its developing portfolio. In addition to Twinning work, CSL has been active in other programmes including PHARE, MEDA, TACIS and UNIDO and have led projects funded by the EU DG trade and the private sector. CSL has been and is currently working with some 20 countries in Eastern Europe and the neighbouring Central Asian/Middle Eastern region.

Participation in the Twinning Programme has many benefits for both parties. CSL staff make a real contribution to the sharing of knowledge between Member States, and learn much about wider EU issues during the exercise. The recipient Member receives access to a wealth of expertise to address development challenges it faces, as well as lasting relationships which will stand both organisations in good stead. Through pursuing a policy of staff flexibility and a hunger for international work, CSL has benefited in many ways from the partnerships it has formed. Twinning projects have undoubtedly set in place collaborative relationships which will persist well beyond the duration of the projects.

Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (Cefas)



For further information:

T **01502 56 2244**

E **enquiries@cefas.co.uk**

W **www.cefas.co.uk**

Background

Cefas is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It is internationally renowned as a centre of excellence for multidisciplinary scientific research, assessment, consultancy advice and training services in:

- fisheries science and management
- marine environmental research, monitoring and management
- aquaculture
- fish and shellfish health and hygiene, disease control and diagnostics.

Cefas' primary purpose is the application of science to support the objectives of government. With more than 500 staff based in three laboratories, its own ocean-going research vessel and over 100 years of fisheries experience, it has a long track record of delivering high-quality services to clients drawn from a broad spectrum of wide-ranging interests.

Achievements

Cefas embarked on a significant change programme during 2005/06 to reposition itself for the science needs of the future.

- Its science strategy document, *Science in Cefas*, adopts a cross-cutting ecosystem approach that best addresses sustainability, the protection of natural resource and the emergency response priorities of the future.
- Cefas continued its pivotal role in the Fisheries Science Partnership, the aim of which is to build relationships between UK fishermen and scientists and to involve fishermen in the co-commissioning of science. It used innovative scientific work and helped fishermen to deploy more selective/environmentally friendly fishing methods.
- It created a new technology unit, recognising the synergy between reliable IT infrastructure, electronics design and vital data capture. Exciting developments in GIS applications and state-of-the-art fish tags are already proving of benefit. In addition, synchronised methods of compiling catch data mean that scientists can build a more comprehensive picture of the current state of the environment.
- In association with others, Cefas initiated a joint research programme into the disposal of dead fish, removing all perceived viral and bacterial risks. A solution was found and will form the basis of a proposal for how fish waste should be treated across the European Union.
- Cefas played a leading role in producing Defra's major report into the current state of the sea around the UK, *Charting Progress*.
- A system for project-mapping and resource management was put in place affording greater clarity and early warning of potential issues and organisational risks.
- Cefas achieved organisational efficiency targets by disposing of surplus estates (including reducing its number of research vessels to one), and adopting and developing a system of e-procurement.
- It retained its Investors in People accreditation, and achieved accreditation to the scientific Joint Code of Practice for Research launched by Defra. Further, it is currently working towards implementing ISO 14001.
- Growth in external income has also exceeded expectations.

Summary

Cefas has arrived at a pivotal point in its history and is embarking on a period of change that embraces the challenges of the future. The passion and dedication of its staff ensures that they will continue to provide vital service to government despite rapidly changing demands.

Communities Scotland

For further information:

T **0131 313 0044**

W **www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk**



Tenant Assessor Project

Communities Scotland's Regulation & Inspection team carries out inspections of registered social landlords and the housing and homelessness functions of local authorities. As part of our commitment to tenant participation and seeking service user views of housing services, we have enrolled 33 volunteer tenant assessors to participate with our inspection teams in carrying out inspections of landlords.

We collaborated and consulted with an initial group of five tenants to develop the tenant assessor role. We later received 70 applications and appointed a further 28 assessors.

The role is unique. There are specific tasks that a tenant will be asked to carry out when participating an inspection, e.g. commenting on leaflets and information, estate visits, talking to tenants. The team helped our enrolment efforts by informing people about the work of Regulation & Inspection and encouraging other tenants in their areas and personal networks to apply. The tenants have spoken at conferences, tenants' meetings and meetings of service providers to increase awareness of their role and help increase understanding of the project and build relationships with stakeholders. It contributes to the transparency of our processes.

Homestake

The Communities Scotland Homestake team developed this new shared equity scheme for Scotland, and then successfully promoted it to the client group. Before its operational launch on 20 September, the team made sure that registered social landlords, lenders and members of the public received targeted information about the scheme.

Around 35 Homestake projects were identified for funding across the country when the scheme opened for business in September. Within three years, it is expected that around 1 000 new Homestake houses a year will be funded throughout Scotland.

The team also developed a version of the scheme that is being tested in Edinburgh and the Lothians. This gives low income households the opportunity to buy homes that are for sale on the open market. The first Homestake owner took ownership of their property in November and it is expected that around 100 homes will be bought this financial year. The success of the scheme can be gauged from the immediate impact that it has had in certain parts of the country; something of which the Homestake development team can be justly proud.

National Standards for Community Engagement

These were developed to enable agencies and communities to work more effectively together and provide a clear framework to help local people influence the planning and delivery of services which affect their lives.

The idea for standards to improve community engagement practice came from a sub-group of the Scottish Social Inclusion Network. This was based on research and anecdotal evidence indicating that the involvement of communities in decisions that affect them was not as strong as it could be. Communities Scotland ensured that the standards were developed in a highly participative way by involving over 500 people from communities, the voluntary sector and the public sector. We achieved a real connection with citizens because over 50% of participants were local people involved in their communities.

The National Standards for Community Engagement are unique to Scotland, and indeed the United Kingdom. As far as we know, nothing similar exists. There is no other community engagement tool like it in the United Kingdom. The team have had interest and enquiries from as far afield as Australia – the enquiry was how they could use the standards to involve local people in dealing with bush fires!

Criminal Records Bureau



For further information:

T **0870 90 90 811**

W **www.crb.gov.uk**

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) was established as an Executive Agency on 1 September 2003, providing wider access to criminal record information through its Disclosure service. This service enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that involving children or vulnerable adults.

The CRB delivers the Disclosure service through strategic partnerships with Capita, the police, Department for Education and Skills, Department of Health and Registered Bodies.

Since becoming an Agency, the CRB has:

- Improved performance and built a solid foundation on which to develop the Disclosure service to meet the expectations of Government and the general public.
- Recovered from the service delivery difficulties of 2002.
- Doubled its capacity to process Disclosure applications from 25 000 to over 55 000 per week
- Increased both system and service capacity to enable the Disclosure service to be extended to around ½ million people working in the care sector, providing greater protection to the elderly.
- The CRB implemented the new Protection of Vulnerable Adults list (POVA) providing even greater protection to the vulnerable
- Extended its Overseas information service to more than 21 countries
- The CRB launched I-PLX- the interim police local cross-referencing database, on time and on budget. This is the first step towards a national database of police force information and an important development in vetting and security checks and represents a significant advancement in the protection of the vulnerable.
- Improved business process to ensure smooth workflow and greater accuracy.
- Established single, accountable management arrangements to oversee the entire management and delivery of end-to-end process.
- Established a number of governance committees to oversee key aspects of our development programme and day-to-day operation.
- Achieved internal efficiency saving resulting in a year on year reduction in the cost of producing a Disclosure.
- Successfully renegotiated its contract with its service delivery partner, Capita. The new contract is a major step forward for the CRB as it now contains:
 - improved performance criteria that will greatly assist further improvements to the service to protect society's most vulnerable members;
 - planned efficiency savings, from October 2004, resulting in a reduction in the price paid to Capita for processing each Disclosure application;
 - the ability to achieve year-on-year operational cost reductions with further incentives to reduce operational costs over the lifetime of the contact;
 - Pricing levels matched to guaranteed volumes, agreed on a bi-annual basis;

- performance measures that relate to the process used by the service; not to processes that were in place prior to CRB'S operational launch; and
- Far greater clarity of roles and responsibilities within the partnership.
- Undertaken customer research, that showed our customers recognise the improvements we have made and value of the service provided:
 - Customer satisfaction levels are at an all time high, reflecting the improvements we have made, year-on-year.
 - 4 out of 5 customers are now satisfied with the service provided by the CRB; with over 1 in 4 customers *'very satisfied'*.
- Undertaken customer research, to understand if CRB is making a difference to the protection of children and the vulnerable.
 - In 2004, organisations prevented over 20 000 unsuitable people from gaining access to children or the vulnerable, as a direct result of CRB checks.
 - Many more unsuitable people are deterred from applying to work with children and the vulnerable as a direct result of a requirement for a CRB check
 - 8 out of 10 organisations say CRB checks: Improve their ability to protect children; Improve their confidence in their recruitment decisions; Have a deterrent effect on unsuitable people applying for posts
 - 3 out of 4 members of the general public say CRB checks: have a positive deterrent effect on unsuitable people from applying; improve an organisation's ability to protect children and vulnerable adults; would make them more likely to use an organisation, than those that do not use CRB checks.

Defence Bills Agency

For further information:

T **0151 242 2260**

E **corp@res.dba.mod.uk**

W **www.defencebills.gov.uk**



DBA | DEFENCE BILLS AGENCY

The key benefit of Agency status for the **Defence Bills Agency** has been the ability to focus on service delivery. A teamwork approach has galvanised a united and flexible workforce to new levels of achievement and productivity; enhancing its reputation as a reliable 'can-do' organisation in which the Ministry of Defence is investing substantial sums for the future.

Services

Operating from Liverpool City Centre, the Agency delivers bill paying, invoicing, debt chasing and accounting services to the Ministry of Defence and other customers.

Value for money

Benchmarked against leading 'blue-chip' financial service companies, its unit costs for electronic bill paying are at world-class levels. Overall costs, including those for handling the most complex paper-based and overseas contracts, are better than the median of all companies surveyed.

Capable

The Defence Bills Agency makes over 5.5 million bill payments annually to suppliers around the globe, in any currency required. The vast majority of these payments are processed electronically. Annually, around £19 billion is paid to the defence industry and across Government, the Agency is an acknowledged leading performer.

Success

Customers rely on the Defence Bills Agency to recover over £1.2 billion annually for the exchequer from a wide range of companies and countries. A fresh, pro-active approach to debt management in 2003 has reaped major benefits with overdue debt at historically low levels (see graph).

Family friendly

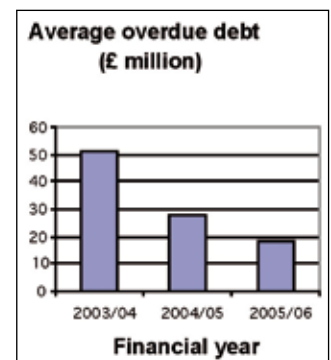
The Agency has long recognised the need to support its people to bring out their full potential. Measures such as term-time working, childcare vouchers and extended flexible hours ensure that both personal and development needs are satisfied.

Quality

The Defence Bills Agency is a successful Agency, reflecting great credit on its workforce. It is an enthusiastic traveller on its *Investor in People* journey and has recently achieved the revitalised *Charter Mark* customer service award. It is currently in its eighth year as an ISO 9000 registered company.

Transformation

The Agency is transforming its Shared Service Centre capabilities for the Resource Accounting era, including adopting new information and infrastructure support, scanning technology and upgrading its accommodation.



Defence Communication Services Agency (DCSA)

For further information:

E mail@tcs-consultants.co.uk

W www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/MicroSite/DCSA/



Outstanding Value Communications from the Defence Fixed Telecommunications Service

The Defence Communication Services Agency's Defence Fixed Networks (DFN) Integrated Project Team (IPT) is responsible for the delivery of a Defence Fixed Telecommunications Service (DFTS), through a ten-year Private Finance Initiative (PFI) deal signed with BT. This service includes voice, data and video telecommunications services across the UK and overseas.

At the time of signing in 1997 the DFTS contract, at £120 million per annum, was the Government's largest PFI deal. Its aim was to transform the MoD's Wide Area Network provision within the UK by replacing over 19 major networks and 46 services with just one network and six services run from two Network Control Centres (one primary and one fallback). The benefit of this has been the development of a unified, interoperable network with improved resilience and security, capital and manpower savings, and most important in this day and age – rapid access to new technology.

In March 2000 the DFTS contract was scrutinised by the NAO who stated that the MoD obtained the contract at a good price, which enabled the MoD to deliver financial savings of around £30m a year, with the NAO declaring the DFTS contract was an excellent example of a PFI providing VFM. Following the scrutiny, the IPT is charged with ensuring that the value for money obtained during procurement is maintained for the lifetime of the contract.

On 1 April 2005 the MoD signed a five year extension to the DFTS Public Private Partnership contract with BT. The extension is worth in excess of £1.5 billion, taking the total contract value to over £3 billion. The DFTS contract extension secures the continuation of global voice, data and video telecommunications services to July 2012. It will bring technological innovation, with the gradual migration of DFTS services onto a new digital core network, providing operational benefits, which contribute to the Department's future capabilities, as set out in the Defence White Paper on '*Delivering Security in a Changing World (July 2004)*'. It represents the best whole life cost solution with savings of a further £15m a year. Revised contract conditions in line with best practice ensure ongoing value for money.

There is continuing pressure to seek further benefits from the project, in order to deliver additional savings and the partnering relationship that the MoD has with BT, through the contract, has enabled the faster introduction of new services at very competitive prices. These services are available across Government should other Government Departments wish to exploit this deal. NATS, The Met Office, Dstl and DARA are already DFTS customers.

Defence Estates (DE)

For further information:

T 0121 311 2140

W www.defence-estates.mod.uk



The Defence Estates Agency Vision is: 'To provide an estate of the right size and quality, which is managed and developed effectively in line with acknowledged best practice, and is sensitive to social and environmental considerations'

Defence Estates (DE) is an Agency within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) that directly supports UK military capability. The above Vision was set in April 2003 when DE was re-launched as an Agency to deliver the needs of its Defence customers – the British Armed Forces based in the UK and overseas.

Operational Successes

The Agency has achieved significant operational success across its wide range of business:

- The placing of five output-based Regional Prime Contracts covering the maintenance and minor new works at Defence establishments across the entire UK mainland. The last Contract was signed in November 2005, within a month of the target date set in 2002 for placing all five contracts, and the overall programme was achieved within the set budget.
- After successful merging with a separate Agency, the Defence Housing Executive, a Prime Contract was signed in November last year to provide property maintenance for the 44 000 Service Family Houses in England and Wales (Scotland is covered through the Regional Prime Contract, Scotland). The Contract, which is incentivised, includes an improved helpdesk facility and a quicker and more flexible service for routine repairs.
- Three separate PFIs have been placed covering the management of water and waste water. Each contract lasts 25 years and involves maintaining supplies and services and transferring associated risks to the private sector who are best placed to manage it.
- Entering into a five year Prime Contract for the provision of a Single Living Accommodation Modernisation (SLAM) Project that fulfils the Government's commitment to improve living conditions as a positive contribution to the recruitment and retention of Service personnel. Over 4,000 new single en-suite rooms have already been delivered and the feedback from the occupants has been highly complimentary.
- Having placed the above contracts (to the value of approx £6 billion), DE and their relevant industrial partners have created Supplier Associations that will be able to share best practice and benchmark across issues such as Health and Safety, and driving out efficiencies.
- Having a sustainable estate is critical to maintaining operational capability. For example, without sustainable training areas, our Armed Forces would fail to meet their standards for operational readiness. DE contributes heavily towards the MOD's Sustainable Development agenda, including the targets for Sites of Special Scientific Interest – 82% of sites in England are already in favourable condition against the Public Service Agreement target of 95% by 2010.

Facts

- Annual expenditure on the estate – £1 billion.
- Staff – over 3,000 personnel.
- Locations – throughout UK, Germany, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Falkland Islands, and in support of deployed operations.

Disability & Carers Service (DCS)



For further information:

T **02077 712 2171**

W **www.dwp.gov.uk**

Disability Benefits Unit Reorganisation

During summer of 2005 it was proposed that the Disability Benefits Unit at Warbreck House was reorganised into five separate business units each being linked to a specific geographical area. This was a world away from the current alphabetical (non geographical) operational unit that existed.

Following the decision to go ahead with the proposal, around September 2005 planning and preparation began.

Staff were consulted about the possible structure and workflow process within the units. A skills audit was then conducted across all staff to identify where key expertise and experience lay.

In order to ensure that a fair and even spread of expertise was allocated to each unit, the decision was made that the majority of staff would have to be moved, some across sites from three miles away. This involved 2,400 staff moving over the period of one weekend.

The movement of the above staff relied upon thorough and detailed planning with various areas both in and outside of Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).

To support the business units, an IT specification had to be written to lift our customers base from an alphabetical platform and replace it onto a geographical one. Again this meant that following detailed written criteria, all of our customers' data would be moving across IT platforms with virtually the 'flick of a switch'.

Robust communications were a key element during this period to ensure that not only our staff and internal partners were kept apprised of events but that the process was virtually seamless to our customers. Our Helpline telephone service maintained target throughout.

During the planning and implementation period excellent relationships with TUS were maintained and minimal numbers of grievance or complaints have been received from staff. All special needs equipment and adjustments have been met.

We are currently heading towards the end of week 3 of live running with no major hiccups to date!

Helpline Transformation

(November 2004 to January 2006)

The journey started in July 2004 with the introduction of a complete set of new telephony equipment acquired under the new DWP Advanced Telephony Contract. No significant improvement to customer service became visible until November when, with the arrival of the new Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer, the customer experience became the number one priority of the DCS. At this point the required additional resources were made available to affect the much-needed changes.

The results speak for themselves:

In Month – April 2005 Calls answered – 438K Engaged – 974K

(In Month – April 2004 Calls answered – 346K Engaged – 3.5 million)

Y to D position @ Jan 2006 – Answered 3.9 million Engaged 29K

(Y to D position @ Jan 2004 – Answered 3.6 million Engaged 17.7 million)

The areas subject to the most significant changes were:**Equipment**

- Invested in new Automatic Call Distributor and new turrets for agents.
- Introduced call recording functionality to allow quality to be monitored and improved.
- Workforce Manager software installed to forecast call patterns and resource requirements.
- Located 88 additional call centre seats in the 22 Operational rooms to provide overflow capacity at times of peak demand.

Capacity

- 120 additional incoming lines procured raising capacity from 390 to 510, thereby increasing accessibility for customers.
- Switched delivery service from Cable & Wireless to BT to reduce costs and secure more reliable service.

People

- Headcount allocated to Helpline increased by 40 WTE bringing total resource to 470 WTE. Recruited these additional staff to match the changing call traffic patterns.
- 500+ Operational staff given three days training to use Turrets and handle Helpline calls at any time the call traffic demands.
- Increased number of Team Leaders to reduce spans of control and allow T/Ls more time to coach and develop staff.
- Re-organised teams to ensure staff working similar hours were co-located and managed by T/L working the same hours.

Procedures

- Introduced electronic forms to reduce clerical activity.
- One-and-Done activities introduced (Change of address, change of Bank details, and Date-of-Death action completed at point of call) to prevent hand-offs to back-room and enhance customer service.

As a result of the improved quality of service being delivered to DCS customers, calls to the Helpline have reduced. The true reflection of the improved Helpline service is found in the removal of 17.6 million engaged tones. Customers are able to get through every time they try and 93% of the calls presented to Helpline this year have been answered. The extent of improvements delivered was confirmed in September 2005, when the Helpline became an accredited member of the Customer Contact Association (CCA). The BSI assessor commented, 'In general, standards of excellence were the norm in Helpline rather than the exception.'

The journey doesn't end here. We have continued our drive for an even better customer experience through the introduction of a Quality monitoring Team which assesses 500 calls each month providing feedback to HEO teams indicating areas where there is scope for further improvement.

A programme of rolling customer surveys has commenced which involves 'phoning customers two weeks after their contact with us to review how effectively their call was handled, to ensure any promised action had been completed, and seek suggestions for improvements. Calls are conducted weekly with results collated and presented quarterly. In the Quarter Ended December 2005, 93% rated the service good or better, with 76% saying it was very good or excellent. Of the 59% of customers who had requested forms or additional information to be sent to them, 96% of them had received the information within 5 days.

Carer's Allowance Unit

The Carer's Allowance Unit is pleased to announce their success in obtaining their 4th Charter Mark award, with distinction. The assessor identified a number of outstanding features of our application considered worthy of referral to Cabinet Office as 'Best Practice', highlighting our involvement with the community and the opportunities we give to our staff to involve themselves in community activities. The report also states 'There have been significant service developments across the past three years. Many of these have been as a response to customer comment'. The congratulatory letter from The Prime Minister states *'Your achievement clearly demonstrates that customers' needs and aspirations genuinely form the basis for design and delivery of the services you provide. This is something that is crucial for the improvements we all want to see in public services.'*

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

For further information:

T **0870 240 0010**

E **vehicles.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk**

W **www.dvla.gov.uk**



Electronic Vehicle Licensing (EVL)

DVLA's mission is to maximise its contribution to improving road safety, reducing crime, improving the environment and improving public experience of Government services, through the efficient provision of the Agency's statutory core activities of driver and vehicle registration. Since its establishment as an Executive Agency in April 1990, DVLA has developed a reputation for providing good customer services and for delivering large projects to time and within budget.

The Agency maintains records of 40.8 million licensed drivers and 32.3 million licensed vehicles. During 2004–2005 we carried out 138.1 million transactions including the provision of 18.4 million registration documents. We collected some £5.0 billion of vehicle excise duty 'car tax' on behalf of the Treasury, of which £4.2 billion was collected through our external agents, Post Office Ltd, and the remainder through our 40 regional offices and by electronic means. The annual vehicle licensing process also contributes significantly to the level of accuracy of our data – the accuracy of our data is key to the success of our business, for example, in helping the police to fight crime and working with local authorities to deal with nuisance vehicles.

One of our key deliverables is to provide an improved public experience of government services (in line with the Government's wider modernisation and efficiency agendas). Electronic Vehicle Licensing (EVL) is an excellent example of how we are meeting this challenge and making it easier for motorists to comply with licensing and other statutory requirements.

The car tax process can now be completed in a matter of minutes thanks to the ground-breaking EVL facility that is available directly and through the Government portal Directgov. The new service links Britain's electronic insurance and MOT databases with DVLA's vehicle records. Drivers no longer need to present paper copies of their tax renewal reminder or log book, MOT (where the new-style test has been performed - as will be universal by April 2006) or insurance certificates to renew their tax discs. Instead they can complete the transaction in a matter of minutes online or by telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere in the world.

DVLA is justly proud of the latest developments. The new service, created in direct response to customer demand, demonstrates how DVLA is modernising its services to fit with changing lifestyles. A 2005 DVLA poll of British motorists revealed:

- 64% said they wanted to complete all such household transactions/bill paying online.
- 68% of motorists preferred online because it's quicker and more convenient.
- 41% of UK drivers have delayed paying a bill or re-taxing their car because they couldn't find the right paperwork and 28% because they couldn't face travelling to pay for it.
- 49% of people have admitted to forgetting where they put their important documents such as MOT certificates and insurance certificates.
- 62% prefer to complete bill paying and admin tasks in the evening

Customers are invited to use the new system through their normal renewal reminder that now includes a personal access code. They can then simply log on to **www.direct.gov.uk/taxdisc** or use the dedicated phone line (0870 850 4444) and key in the code to access the EVL system. By January 2006, over 1 million UK drivers had successfully relicensed using the electronic service. It is anticipated that 11 million people will have used the service by 2007, and 19 million by 2008.

The success of EVL has been recognised by the system winning the Modernising Government category of the prestigious New Statesman New Media Awards. In presenting the award, Government Chief Information Officer, Ian Watmore, commended the excellent design of the website and commented on how simple he had found it to use to tax his own vehicle. The Editor of the New Statesman added that it was particularly evident that the service is designed with the customer in mind.

Having established the new system for vehicles, the transformation programme at DVLA continues with the re-engineering of the drivers' system. This is designed to provide similar accessibility to online licensing for drivers as in the EVL case. It will also provide links between the two systems, for example to enable easy online update of change of address for both vehicle and driver in a single transaction and to prompt customers on a regular basis to check that their details remain correct on both records.

Driving Standards Agency (DSA)

For further information:

T 0115 901 2500

W www.dsa.gov.uk



Channel Shift – The DSA Success Story

Summary

The Driving Standards Agency has successfully implemented internet booking services and automated speech recognition solutions with very impressive take-up rates.

- 54% of all theory test were booked via the internet in December 2005
- 42% of car practical test were booked via the internet in December 2005
- 1.5 million calls were answered by the speech recognition solution in 2004/2005
- Call volume reduced by 26%
- Cost saving of £3.2 million realised as at December 2005

Purpose

This paper discusses the DSA experience with channel shift, migrating customers from traditional channels to electronic channels without a reduction in the quality of customer services and customer satisfaction.

Background

As part of the modernising government agenda, the Driving Standards Agency developed the following electronic channels:

1. Internet Booking Service (IBS) for theory and practical test: This allows booking, amendment and cancellation of driving test. Phase 1 IBS for Theory Test was delivered in December 2001 while that for Practical Test went live in October 2003.
2. Automated Speech Recognition (ASR): This system deals with requests for earlier test dates for practical tests made to the agency's call centre.

What we did to ensure a successful outcome?

1. We defined what a successful outcome is to us.
 - a. Take up rate up to 60% for internet services after five years from the relevant date of introduction
 - b. Customer satisfaction level must be maintained
 - c. Customer must find the services easy to use
 - d. Cost savings must accrue to the agency
2. Contraction of employment must be managed constructively.
3. Functionality to be delivered in phases to minimise investment and risk and providing opportunity to apply lessons learnt from earlier phases to fine-tune later delivery.
4. Partnering with reputable organisation and recruited staff with knowledge and experience about the new area.
5. Carefully controlled launch ensuring that bugs and other faults were identified and fixed before being opened to the general public.

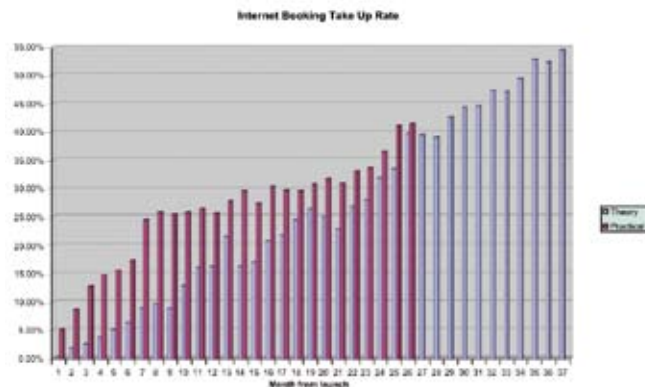
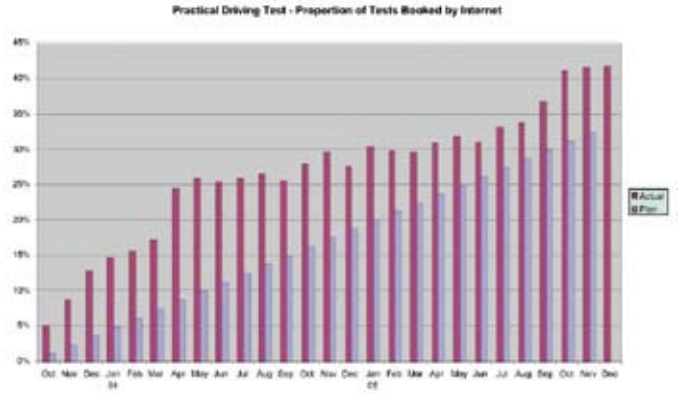
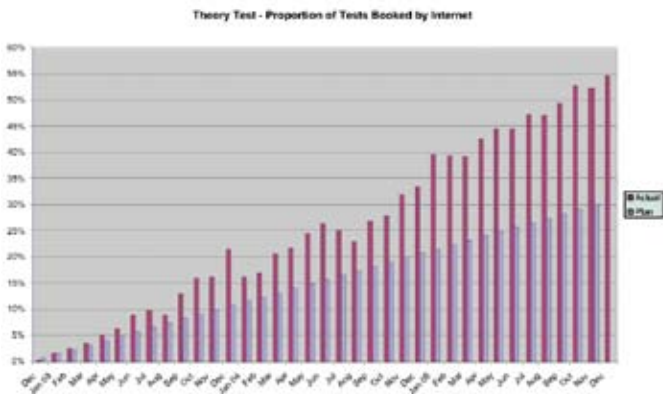
Where we are?

With ongoing communication and marketing effort and the curtailing of weekend call centre opening, together with better management of test-waiting time, we have achieved the following:

- Theory Test Bookings
More than half of all test bookings (54% in December 2005) now made online. (Target for March 2006 of 50% has been exceeded already. March 2007 target is 60%)
- Practical Test Car Booking
42% of all car bookings made through the internet in December 2005 (March 2007 target is 50%)
- Call Centre
26% reduction in call volume (from 2004/2005 to 2005/2006)
ASR now handles more than 1.5 million calls per year equivalent to 35% of all calls
Headcount reduction of 70 Full-Time Equivalent agents (mainly temporary staff) and the closure of the Cardiff call centre as call volumes do not justify its continued operation

Overall, the estimated saving to the agency so far is £3.2m.

During this time, the satisfaction of customers with our services has remained consistently high with satisfaction with the internet booking services well above 90%.



The Driving Theory Test

The Driving Theory Test became part of the Driving Test in 1996. Originally presented as a multiple choice pen and paper test of driving and road safety knowledge, it was converted to a computer based assessment using touch screen technology in January 2000.

The new technology enabled DSA in 2002 to introduce a second element to the theory test – a performance test of hazard perception skills. The result of 10 years research by DSA, TRL and others, the hazard perception test uses video clips of real driving on real roads to test candidates' perception of when they see a hazardous situation developing. Research showed that new drivers have poorer hazard perception skills than experienced drivers. It also proved that with training, the skill could be improved in new drivers to bring them up to the same level as experienced drivers.

The delivery of the theory test is outsourced to a strategic partner, currently Pearson. The company provides an end-to-end service to DSA from booking the test (either via a contact centre or over the web) and collecting fees, to delivering the tests to candidates through a network of 157 theory test centres throughout England, Scotland and Wales. All the centres are DDA compliant. To serve those who live in the more rural parts of the North of Scotland, there are two mobile testing units which take the theory test to candidates who live in those areas.

For those who do not have English as a first language, the test is voiced over in 19 foreign languages. Welsh speakers have the test presented in their own language, or voiced over. For those who are deaf or have other hearing difficulties, the test is presented in video in British Sign Language. Other special accommodations are available for those who require them.

Over 1.5 million theory tests are delivered each year.

The contract for the service requires the contractor to meet three key performance targets each month, and 33 service standards. If these targets are not met, then the contractor incurs penalty points which attract liquidated damages. The key performance targets relate to providing 95% of candidates with a test slot within 2 weeks; answering 90% of calls to the contact centre within 20 seconds; and having 90% of candidates being satisfied overall with the whole experience. The contractor continually meets and exceeds these targets, and around 97% of candidates say they are satisfied with the service they receive.

Internet booking for theory tests was introduced by DSA in December 2001. This way of booking has grown in popularity and in December 2005, over 54% of theory test bookings made were over the web.

For the future, other types of tests, for example computer assessed case studies, and attitude and aptitude assessments, are planned to meet the needs of the road safety agenda.

East Midlands Development agency



For further information:
 T **0115 988 8300**
 E **info@emd.org.uk**
 W **www.emda.org.uk**

Creation of Blueprint – the East Midlands Property Investment Fund

‘One of the key political challenges of the new century is to make Britain’s towns and cities not just fit to live in but thriving centres of human activity’

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister (Preface: Towards an Urban Renaissance)

Blueprint has been established to take up that challenge in the East Midlands. In 2004–05 the East Midlands Regional Development Agency (emda) held around £20 million of ‘investment assets’. These were effectively industrial units located across the region, which were rented out to small businesses. EMDA recognised that:

- Managing commercial lettings was not a core competence for a Regional Development Agency,
- The value of the assets could be used to leverage in private sector money to fund the investment plans of the Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs) and other bodies supporting urban regeneration in the region.

We therefore decided to put the assets into a vehicle initially called the East Midlands Property Investment Fund (EMPIF) which is a joint venture owned by:

- emda, who hold a 50% share.
- English Partnerships who have a shared involvement in urban regeneration and the URCs; they have a 25% share.
- A private sector investor, Igloo Regeneration Partnership, with a 25% share.

EMPIF (renamed as Blueprint) was created on 13 May 2005. The partners share a common desire to set new standards for socially responsible investment in regeneration to deliver for the region, well designed, sustainable, mixed use, regeneration projects that will further enhance economic growth.

Blueprint was officially launched to the region on 29 September 2005 at the East Midlands Property Awards Annual Dinner. Blueprint, with partners emda, English Partnerships, Igloo and Freethcartwright (the partnership’s legal advisors) picked up the regional ‘Deal of the Year’ award.

Following the creation of Blueprint, the emda office in Sleaford which was used to manage the Investment Portfolio, has now been closed resulting in efficiency savings for emda and a profit on disposal of the site.

Blueprint’s activity will be concentrated in the East Midlands six urban priority areas of Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, Northampton, Corby and Lincoln. Its remit is to add value to the regeneration process, and its primary focus will be those areas where private developers either cannot or at best would struggle to deliver appropriate solutions. Specific activities include:

- Acting as a conduit through URCs and other public sector bodies so they can deliver their physical regeneration plans.
- Bringing derelict and under-used land back into beneficial use.
- Kick starting development in priority urban areas in order to create a local market for property which the private sector will, in future, sustain alone.
- Providing accommodation for businesses, particularly for creative and cultural industries and R&D enterprises.

Blueprint holds the option to acquire a number of emda sites. Development plans are being established for all of these sites, and progress is reported on the Blueprint website: <http://www.blueprint.gb.net>.

English Heritage

For further information:

T **0870 333 1181**

E **customers@english-heritage.org.uk**

W **www.english-heritage.org.uk**



ENGLISH HERITAGE

English heritage speeds planning advice by 25%

Thanks to comprehensive modernisation within the organisation and a dedicated project to improve speed and efficiency, English Heritage is now delivering its planning advice 25% faster than it used to. Over 95% of planning and listed building consent advice is being given within 21 days, a dramatic improvement on the previous target of 28 days and an achievement rate of circa 70%.

The remarkable improvements, achieved through new training for staff and the better use of technology, are helping all those in need of advice on projects that range from adding conservatories to highly-graded historic buildings to major new developments that involve or affect the historic environment. The faster turn-around times for English Heritage advice mean that local authorities are able to process cases faster, meet their own Government-set targets and pass that improvement on to the public and professionals. The changes are just part of the effort being made by English Heritage to speed up the planning process and help make the work of local authorities easier.

Steve Bee, English Heritage Director of Planning and Development, said: *'With this initiative, English Heritage staff have created the greatest revolution in customer service that the organisation has ever seen. With the new system and intensive training, we are now simply faster and better at what we do. We are also no longer being dragged into cases that shouldn't involve us and can focus high quality expert advice on the cases that really need it.'*

The service improvement has been accompanied by the introduction of the new Charter for English Heritage Advisory Services which sets out the standards and level of service that clients can expect from English Heritage.

The brave new world of IT in English Heritage

June 2004 saw the culmination of two years of planning and preparation when, over a 12 week period, the Technology Refresh project rolled out 2000 new PCs across 200 sites throughout England. At £5.4m the project was one of the largest ever undertaken within English Heritage and was delivered on time, within budget, and with no significant downtime or disruption to service.

Behind the scenes, the project also involved the installation of 156 new network switches, 46 servers and increases in network capacities by a factor of 10 in many cases.

We moved from an incompatible mix of obsolete email and operating systems to the industry standard Microsoft XP, introducing internet access to every desktop. For the first time, the whole of English Heritage was able to operate on the same (modern) email system.

Each of the 2000 PCs or laptops was individually configured to meet the needs of its user while the number of software packages used was rationalised from over 1500 to around 300.

As a result of the rationalisation and modernisation of the whole IT infrastructure, IT support costs were reduced by over £200k p.a.

Together with other improvements in our ICT management processes, this project has allowed us to achieve and to sustain consistent user satisfaction levels of over 95%.

Michael Crich, English Heritage's Director of Resources said: *'This has been an outstandingly successful project. It has delivered on time, within budget and provides everyone in English Heritage with the best modern tools to do their jobs'.*

Since then, the new IT infrastructure has also provided the base platform for the introduction of an organisation-wide Geographical Information System which has enabled massive cost reductions, and which is contributing further to the modernisation of our casework processes and our ability to communicate effectively with local authorities and government departments on planning and designation issues.

BS15000 for English Heritage (EH)

In November 2005, a programme of continuous improvement in our IT Service Management processes enabled EH to gain certification against the BS15000 standard. This is effectively the 'Gold Standard' for ICT service Management and English Heritage are the first government body or NDPB to achieve it.

Mike McElwee, English Heritage's ICT Director said: *'This award, together with our consistently high user satisfaction levels, demonstrates that English Heritage is delivering an ICT service which stands comparison with the best in UK.'*

The Fire Service College

For further information:

T **01608 650 831**

E **enquiries@fireservicecollege.ac.uk**

W **www.fireservicecollege.ac.uk**



Working with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on New Dimension

The New Dimension (ND) programme is one part of DCLG's contribution to the Government's Civil Contingencies Capabilities Programme. Its aim is to enhance the country's preparedness and resilience by improving the capability of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to respond to major and catastrophic incidents.

The programme will deliver a total of six capabilities, each of which defines a variety of deliverables. Three of the capabilities: Mass De-contamination, Urban Search & Rescue and Water (including High Volume Pumping) are being 'rolled out' nationally to a structured and well organised plan. Prior to the roll-out of the appliances and equipment a comprehensive and wide ranging programme of training is being delivered. The majority of that training is delivered at the Fire Service College (FSC), Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire which is an executive agency of the DCLG. The focus has been to 'train the trainers' so that they can cascade their expertise to the regionally based ND teams.

Over the past two years the FSC has trained over 220 High Volume Pump (HVP) Instructors and run an equal number of HVP Officer and Engineer awareness courses. In that same period 186 FRS personnel have attended Mass De-contamination Instructor Courses and over 1370 FRS personnel have received Urban Search and Rescue technician and instructor training.

A total of 48 High Volume Pumps will eventually be located around the country to provide coverage for those areas at risk of flooding but they can be deployed country wide to deal with any type of incident where high volumes of water need to be moved.

Such use of these pumps for flooding has already been extensively demonstrated at Boscastle, Glastonbury and Carlisle.

Another dimension where a total of 14 High Volume Pumps were used to pump foam was at the recent massive explosion and fire at the oil depot at Buncefield, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

The explosion at the oil depot – one of the five largest depots in the UK – was heard up to 300 kilometres away. The blast, which measured 2.4 on the Richter Scale, blew windows out of homes up to three kilometres away and devastated the surrounding industrial estate. The initial crews were confronted with a scene of unprecedented destruction covering several square kilometres which has been described as the largest incident of its kind in peace-time Europe. As well as setting fire to the oil storage tanks, the blast destroyed the emergency water supply pump houses and completely obstructed perimeter roads with fallen trees. The intensity of the fires meant that two of the three emergency open water supplies were inaccessible.

The only available water supply of sufficient quantity was a small lake about 1.8 kilometres away which needed a temporary road to be built to provide access. 14 high volume pumps, 4 from the FSC were assembled together with road building and craning facilities required to get the pumps into place. The firefighting plan required 32,000 litres of water and 1200 litres of foam concentrate per minute.

At the peak of the incident 180 firefighters, including 8 staff based at the FSC, attended the scene. It took more than 600,000 litres of foam concentrate, 40 000 000 litres of water and 30 km of fire hose to deal with the incident.

The staff from the FSC were praised for the vital part they played in tackling the huge blaze. Three members of the FSC team were HVP Instructors at the College who all volunteered for duty as soon as the news of the disaster came through. The instructors, all experienced firefighters, went to Buncefield in an advisory capacity but were very soon being used operationally. They remained at the scene, working regulated shifts, for a period of four days.

The 14 HVPs that attended the incident are each capable of pumping 7 000 litres of water a minute compared with the standard FRS pumps which move around 2 000 to 2 500 litres per minute. It has been estimated that 70 standard FRS pumps would have been required had the HVPs not been available.

The four HVPs, associated vehicles and staff from FSC played an invaluable part in bringing the fire under control. Without doubt the equipment and expertise provided by FSC assisted in an early extinction of the fire.

Forest Enterprise England

For further information:

T **0117 906 6000**

E **fe.England@forestry.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.forestry.gov.uk**



The Forestry Commission has three agencies: Forest Research, plus Forest Enterprise England and Forest Enterprise Scotland who manage the FC Estate.

FE England was established in 2002, following devolution of forestry to the three countries. Since then we have become established as a recognised leader in the delivery of outdoor recreation, urban green-space and habitat creation and management. We have also continued our role as the largest grower of 'FSC' certified sustainable timber in England, and have been instrumental in the establishment of the wood-fuelled power generation industry.

Examples of successes in the past year include:

Healthy recreation in the East Midlands

Salcey Forest lies between Northampton and Milton Keynes. The site has long been a local recreation resource. However, by the mid-eighties visitor numbers had fallen below 100 000.

The site has now been refurbished, combining recreation provision with investigation and interpretation of the wood's archaeology. This work was part funded by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and should increase visitor numbers to over 250 000. Specific deliverables include:

- Attracting new visitors through the Woodland café and by building the 'Tree-top way': an innovative high-level walk that takes people into the tree canopy. New users include mothers with young children who previously did not visit because of security concerns and community groups with special needs.
- Improving the accessibility of the site to less-mobile members of the public by re-surfacing the all-ability Elephant Walk, and upgrading the Church Path Walk to all-ability standard.
- Family cycle route – designed to attract families with safe cycling for healthy living objectives
- Outreach work targeting community groups in Wellingborough and Northampton. This work will particularly focus on encouraging wider use from ethnic minorities.

Reversing Industrial dereliction in the Nottinghamshire coalfields

Years of mining in Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire have blighted the landscape surrounding some of the most deprived communities in England. We have worked with The Land Regeneration Trust, local communities and others to convert over 500 ha of these 'brownfield' sites into attractive wooded green-space which will provide some much needed green infrastructure to these neglected areas.

Forest Stewardship Council Timber Certification

During the year, our woodland management underwent a full certification audit against the international 'Gold Standard' for sustainable woodland management, as endorsed by WWF and Greenpeace. We passed the audit successfully, which means that we can use the FSC logo on our woodland produce (including timber and venison).

Lowland Heath restoration

This year we completed the restoration of our 2000th ha of this UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat, and we are now responsible for the management of over 30% of the total area of lowland heath in England. This project is part of our wider 'landscape management' approach: applying our land management skills over large areas to deliver many benefits from different sites in an integrated way.

Forest Research (FR)



For further information:

T **01420 22255**

E **research.info@forestry.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.forestresearch.gov.uk**

Forest Research (FR) is the research agency of the Forestry Commission, the UK government's forestry department. Our overall aim is to deliver high-quality scientific research and surveys to inform the development of forestry policies and promote high standards of sustainable forest management.

Trees and woodlands have a lot to contribute to sectors such as renewable energy, the built environment, tourism, recreation and health, where the benefits are not only environmental and social but also economic. Our work therefore involves a number of partnerships with research institutes and practitioners in non-forestry sectors so that forestry can integrate with other land uses.

Our Environmental and Human Sciences Division covers environmental monitoring and change, carbon dynamics, land reclamation, soil sustainability, cultural heritage and archaeology and forest hydrology. We are exploring how forests and woodlands contribute to society and how forestry affects people's lives.

Recently we have started a new programme on trees and human wellbeing. From our own research we know that trees, woodlands and natural spaces often play an important role in improving people's health and well-being. Active involvement of people in outdoor activities in forests has direct significance for health, especially chronic health problems related to inactivity. Woodlands contribute to health and well-being not only through exercise, whether that is gentle, moderate or strenuous, but also by providing locations where people can relax and socialise with friends and family.

'Trees and Woodlands, Nature's health service' prepared jointly by Liz O'Brien in Forest Research and Forestry Commission England has examples of woodland contributing to people's well-being. This activity is part of a larger initiative, the Forestry Commission *Active Woods* campaign, that aims to get people out into the woods.

Forest Research has been working with health, environmental and forestry professionals in England, Wales and Scotland on projects including Chopwell Wood Health Pilot (near Gateshead) and the Woodland and Health Pilot Project in the West Midlands. Other research, on children's participation in Forest School, has shown that children develop increased confidence and awareness of their environment with regular visits to woodlands.

Government Car and Despatch Agency (GCDA)



For further information:

T **0207 217 3838**

E **roy.burke@gcda.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.gcda.gov.uk**

Next time you attend a meeting in Whitehall, think of us. As you pass the women's war memorial, remember that it was the bravery of women that brought our Agency into being.

Sixty years ago, women – mainly debutantes – braved the bombs and masonry that fell on London to drive Winston Churchill and his Cabinet to their appointments. Most used their own cars.

After the war, legend says that Churchill called for all departments to tot up their taxi fares. He then declared that it made economic sense to deploy these brave women as government drivers, permanently.

Today, after several name changes, the Government Car and Despatch Agency is a thriving concern offering a number of special services to departments and public sector bodies, including the courts.

As well as driving ministers and permanent secretaries, we also run a secure intra-government mail service known as the InterDespatch Service or IDS. This ensures that the post of any agency or government body is delivered securely.

Added to the mail and car services, the events of 9/11 caused us to create a new service. When anthrax attacks hit America in 2001, Cabinet Office Minister, Christopher Leslie, commissioned us to set up off-site mail screening. We had the unit running in two weeks.

Today our Agency screens government mail to intercept nefarious objects and substances for the Department of Transport, the DCLG, the Privy Council and the Department of Health.

We are happy to do this for any agency, department or public body that needs mail screening. To meet the requirements of the Lyons review, we'll have firm plans to extend mail-screening beyond Whitehall in the future.

So far we have intercepted everything from handguns to poisons in the mail, en route to civil servants, security guards and politicians. And as this is an off-site service, we have saved the government hundreds of thousands of pounds in implementing evacuation plans.

Although we are probably the grandad amongst the agencies showcased here, we are far from old-fashioned. We are at the cutting edge of green car technology, offering ministers the greenest solutions and driving down the amount of carbon dioxide given off around Whitehall and government estates.

We even offer civil servants their own environmentally-friendly taxi service called Green Cars. Any public body, agency or department can call 020 7217 3814 and set up an account. The service is growing, with Defra, the Department for International Development, the Northern Ireland Office, the Department for Constitutional Affairs and Privy Council Office among our clientele.

We also train civil servants in security driving and manage their fleets of car.

Our success lies in offering the service you would expect from fellow civil servants, coupled with the business experience that delivers. We are proud of the way in which our Agency has grown from the seeds of bravery. When we celebrate our sixtieth birthday this April, we'll raise a glass of bubbly (water, as no alcohol is allowed in operational areas) to those first women.

They probably had no idea, that today their legacy would be a thriving government agency with a mass of expertise and something to offer every public sector mail room, fleet and private office.

The Government Car and Despatch Agency is an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport.

Highways Agency



For further information:

T **0207 153 4724**

E **pressoffice@highways.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.highways.gov.uk**

The drivers' friend

Almost 30 million motorists use the Highways Agency network of motorways and other strategic roads in England every year. They drive over 150 billion kilometres annually on this safe and reliable network, which carries one third of all traffic and two thirds of all goods traffic.

With traffic levels increasing and a commitment to meet ministerial targets to improve journey time reliability the Agency is growing its role to become the drivers' friend.

This year the Agency will introduce 1 200 traffic officers to patrol motorways across the country. Their job is to reduce incident-related delays and improve safety, release police time to tackle crime and other core policing activities, and develop the Highways Agency as a network operator. They are managed by a further 300 staff in seven regional control centres. All of these will operate 24/7. Motorway patrols will be introduced across each region in phases during 2006.

Traffic officers have a number of powers, such as the ability to stop and direct traffic. They are now fully utilising these powers, including undertaking rolling road closures and the removal of debris from the carriageway.

- Traffic officers attend an average of 100 incidents a day;
- There are currently more than 1 000 traffic officers and control room staff; and
- By summer 2006 traffic officers will be patrolling some 2 600 km of motorways and 315 km of key trunk roads from seven regional control centres and 28 dedicated outstations (plus a further three that are integrated within a regional control centre)

So how are traffic officers helping drivers?

When heavy snow fell over Christmas, traffic officers were deployed ahead of schedule to help the police. They pulled up to five vehicles a day out of the snow and acted as the 'eyes and ears' of the police, alerting them to icy conditions on motorways.

Last August, a lorry carrying bleach exploded between junctions 12 and 13 of the M25, closing the entire motorway in both directions. On a hot summer day, traffic officers arranged for 3 000 bottles of water to be provided for motorists stuck in queues. In the end they were not needed, as concerted efforts by traffic officers and the police meant that traffic was cleared promptly and the road was opened significantly quicker than in earlier similar incidents.

In an unprecedented incident, several explosions at an oil depot at Buncefield, in Hertfordshire, meant the emergency services called on HA traffic officers to help with closures on the M1 and M10. This was before traffic officer patrols had started on these roads. Traffic officers set up cordons to allow access to only emergency vehicles, implemented rolling road blocks to keep traffic at a safe speed through smoke and answered a large number of public enquiries on the scene.

Each autumn, one of the busiest parts of the motorway network, the M3 and M25 near Heathrow experiences congestion caused by the unlikeliest of candidates – swans. At this time, traffic near junction 13 of the M25, where it crosses the Thames, is disrupted by swans on the carriageway at least two or three times a day. Traffic officers have undertaken training with a local swan sanctuary to enable them to catch swans quickly and safely with minimal distress to the birds, allowing them to get the traffic moving quickly.

In a second development, the National Traffic Control Centre collects information on network conditions, which is collected, analysed and quality assured and then given to customers. Around 350 strategic variable message signs at the key decision points on the motorway network are set by control room operators to supply long-distance diversion advice and information during major incidents, helping drivers avoid problem spots. The media is informed of traffic conditions and roadworks information for radio and TV broadcasts.

Real time traffic information is available on the HA website and from an automated telephone service providing up-to-date information on traffic conditions.

In another development, the Agency has been testing high-tech site-survey equipment to speed-up police investigations at the scene of serious roads incidents and re-open lanes more quickly. It often takes more than six hours to clear a serious road incident. Once casualties have been removed, the police must gather evidence for their investigation.

Only when the police have finished can the Highways Agency repair any damage to the road before the route can be safely reopened. A trial in the West Midlands is using high-tech scanning and recording equipment to survey incident sites to provide scene plans suitable for use in a police accident investigation and speed up the restoration of traffic flows.

HM Courts Service



For further information:

T **0845 456 8770**

E **customerservicecshq@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk**

Collecting court fines by text

The novel idea of sending mobile phone text messages to offenders evading magistrates' court fines has proved a successful example of courts using modern technology effectively.

A pilot scheme run by Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) sent 'pay up or get locked up' reminder texts to offenders – and around three-quarters paid immediately. HMCS is now looking to extend the pilot by sending text message reminders to people failing to attend court or their community service.

HMCS is an executive agency of the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA). It was set up in April 2005 and brings together, for the first time, 42 independent Magistrates' Courts Committees and the Court Service into one single body. It is responsible for the management of the civil, family and criminal courts in England and Wales. Its aim is to ensure that justice is delivered effectively and efficiently.

As a forward-looking organisation, HMCS is increasingly looking at new ways to improve the management of courts and the delivery of justice. Collecting debts and compensating crime victims is a vital part of the work. Courts can no longer rely on traditional methods alone to collect fines. The use of modern technology is vital to ensure that justice is enforced efficiently.

Most people now own a mobile phone and the pilot scheme was set up to test the effectiveness of collecting fines by text. It produced excellent results.

Around 150 persistent offenders got the text messages on their phones last October from Staffordshire magistrates' court. The message certainly hit home – as the result of three-quarters paying immediately shows.

The pilot was all part of 'Operation Payback 3' a national blitz by HMCS, working with the police, to get fines paid. It was the most successful national fines blitz so far with over £2 million being collected. This figure far exceeded the previous blitz figure of £1.7 million. Overall October 2005 saw the highest monthly fines collection in two years, exceeding average fine collections by about £4 million.

Rigorous enforcement to collect fines and collect them on time is high on HMCS's agenda. Two and a half years ago a mere 50 per cent of fines were paid. The figure is now 83 per cent. Fines and community penalties can only be credible if they are enforced properly.

HMCS is now evaluating the success of the pilot which will be tested more widely with magistrates' courts in the North West reminding offenders to pay up during April this year.

The certain knowledge that offenders will be pursued relentlessly will encourage them to pay their fine and do their community penalty. It sends an important message to criminals that the justice system is one step ahead of them and will not tolerate a failure to respect the courts. This fits in well with the Government's respect agenda.

HM Prison Service

For further information:

T **0207 217 6777**

E **public.enquiries@hmprisons.gov.uk**

W **www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk**



HM Prison Service became a 'Next Steps' Agency on 1 April 1993. The prison population at that time was 44 550 and there had been 347 escapes from prison custody the year before, with 232 escapes from prison establishments and 115 from escorts. From this position, HM Prison Service has reduced the level of escapes to just 3 from prisons this year. This has been achieved against a substantial rise in prison population to nearly 68 000 in the custody of the public sector.

This achievement has been the result of a determined and targeted effort to improve security, and the embedding of a performance management culture throughout the Service.

Agency status introduced Key Targets including one for escapes. Performance management was further strengthened with the creation of an Internal Audit Unit. In 1996 the Unit began bi-annual audits of every prison against national performance standards set out in the Prison Service's Security Manual. The outcomes of security audits themselves became Performance Targets for each prison, and the introduction of self-audit further assisted in the drive to improve security practice and reduce escapes.

Between 1993 and 1997, escorts to court and between prisons were contracted out to private companies in a series of stages. This enabled capital investment in more secure vehicles and released trained prison officers to strengthen work in prisons.

HM Prison Service leads on the continuing strategy to maintain the current low level of escapes, in both the public and private sectors, and meeting the target set by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. Cornerstones of the plan are strategies to reduce escapes from court, improved instruction and guidance from the centre and maximising the gains from new technology.

Key Performance Indicator Escapes – 1992-2006

	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06
Escapes from Prison	232	171	151	52	33	23	28	30	14	16	5	9	12	3

Jobcentre Plus

For further information:

T **0207 273 6235**

E **heather.rawcliffe@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**



Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department for Work and Pensions, brings together employment and benefit services for people of working age. It provides a professional and modern service to meet the diverse needs of employers and those seeking work. Over the last few years, the organisation has undergone a series of major changes to improve the service and experience it provides customers, making use of new technology to help employers and employees access jobs, and each other, more effectively.

Customers can now access Jobcentre Plus services through around 1 000 locations across the UK, including over 700 newly refurbished offices. The organisation is used by over 400 000 employers across the country and helps place 20 000 people into work every week. Customers are also now able to place and search for jobs both online and over the phone – currently, over 300 000 vacancies are listed each week on the Jobcentre Plus website and more than 3 million job search requests received, making it the UK's number one recruitment website.

Case study: Employer Direct Online

Jobcentre Plus launched its first employer-facing Internet service, Employer Direct online (EDON), in May 2005. With this innovative new service, employers can post and manage their vacancies on the UK's largest jobsite.

The service was launched following an initial business trial with 300 employers in 2004, to test the resilience of the system, and the service appetite from business. Initial employer feedback revealed concerns regarding the time taken for the secure online registration process. Jobcentre Plus worked in collaboration with the eGovernment Unit and IT partners to design and implement a new process, which resulted in a two week reduction in the time taken to register for and use the service.

The target of 10% of weekly vacancies business being posted via EDON was hit seven months early. Evaluation has shown that the service now fully meets the needs of employers and has now been adopted by all of Jobcentre Plus for future e-channel developments.

For further information on the services that Jobcentre Plus provides employers and people of working age visit **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

Land Registry

For further information:

T **020 7917 8888**

E **webmaster@landregistry.gov.uk**

W **www.landreg.gov.uk**



Land Registry Direct

Land Registry Direct has been designed for our business customers. The service requires customers to hold a credit account with Land Registry and register as users.

An improved and more reliable Internet version of Land Registry Direct was successfully introduced in 2005 and account holders have risen significantly from 4 962 to 11 069 in December 2005, with individual users rising from 20 000 to over 80 000. Land Registry Direct attracts a monthly fee income of over £2.3 million and, in November 2005, it processed a daily average of 68 560 transactions.

Land Registry Direct users can view and download any of our 20 million registers, title plans and deeds referred to. They can also save time and money by using the online system to deliver applications for a range of other Land Registry services formerly only available by post, such as electronic lodgement of simple applications and electronic register updates. They can also obtain most official search results online. We have continued to add new facilities to this service, such as searches of the index of franchises and manors.

Land Registry Direct will be our main platform for launching e-conveyancing services over the next year, including e-lodgement enhancements, Public Key Infrastructure document authentication, map-based enquiries and a prototype chain matrix.

Land Register Online

Land Register Online is our information service aimed at the general public and the casual business user, available between 7 am and 12 midnight, Monday to Saturday and without the need to register. Land Register Online was officially launched on 31 January 2005 and supports all popular browsers and operating systems.

Land Register Online is available via the Internet and enables anyone to view and print out any of our 20 million land registers and title plans at a fee of £2.00 per transaction, payable by credit card.

Land registers contain details of ownership, benefits such as easements, restrictions such as restrictive covenants and any mortgages. If the property has changed hands since April 2000, the register will also show the price paid.

At the end of November 2005 business was running at a daily average of 3 888 downloads per day, a 250% increase from launch. In the spring, image-based access as well as text-based access will be introduced.

European Land Information Service (EULIS)

The EULIS project was instigated in 2002 with the aim of opening up the European property and secured credit markets. A consortium of eight European land registries, including the Land Registry for England and Wales and Registers of Scotland, had by 2004 proved the concept, identified customer demand and produced a business case to take this forward. The programme objective is 'to provide easy world-wide access to European electronic land and property information in order to promote and underpin a single European property market'.

The service is aimed at business customers and is very simple. Subscribers to our own Land Registry Direct service, for instance, can access any of the eight participating land registries' databases at the click of a button from our site and obtain information on any registered property in that country. There are extensive information pages and help points – in English – to guide the customer to the information required and explain what the data means. Charges are those charged locally plus a small premium for the 'home' Registry converted to the customers' local currency and charged to their local Land Registry account.

The full service will be operational by late spring and will allow, in particular, all worldwide, secured credit organisations to operate in ideal trading conditions and in full and fair competition.

The original eight participants (Sweden; England and Wales; Finland; Netherlands; Scotland; Norway; Austria and Lithuania) will now be joined by a further eight (Iceland; Italy; Northern Ireland; Eire; Czech Republic; Latvia; Poland and Slovak Republic). The project is being funded substantially by EC grants.

Met Office

For further information:

T **0870 900 0100**

E **enquiries@met-office.gov.uk**

W **www.met-office.gov.uk**



The Met Office – together, we can do more

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, the weather and the environment affects everyone in the UK and overseas. This short compilation of success stories offers an insight to the domestic and international reach of the Met Office over the last year and demonstrates how, by working together with the UK government and its agencies, we help everyone prepare for the weather and inform the global debate on climate change.

Met Office expertise lies in helping others to make important weather-related decisions and plan ahead – for weekend leisure activities, critical business opportunities, national contingency arrangements and international aid.

Spring

In early 2005, the Met Office hosted a three-day conference on Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Department funds much of the research carried out by the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research – a division of the Met Office based at Exeter, which played a major part in the conference.

More than just another scientific convention, the international gathering of more than 200 scientists and experts addressed the biggest issues relating to the stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere. Margaret Beckett, the then Secretary of State at Defra, was in attendance and commended the Met Office on the arrangements for the conference. Defra also supported the key outcomes from the talks.

Radical changes in how the world generates and uses energy will be needed to combat the global challenge of climate change, the conference concluded. This requires an international approach as no single country can solve the problem by acting alone. But while science underlines this very serious issue, government leadership is equally important in the move towards cleaner technology – including in the UK. The Met Office continues to advise Defra and the wider Government on ways to achieve this, particularly beyond 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol has run its course.

The conference also enabled the Met Office to test the loaning out of its conference facilities to another user, allowing Defra to make use of the space and striking aesthetics of our new headquarters. Since then, we have hosted a number of other Government events and gained an excellent reputation as a conference venue.

Summer

The Atlantic hurricane season typically runs from June to November, and 2005 was one of the most active and widely reported. Extending well into autumn, the season broke the 1969 record for the greatest number of tropical storms. With only 21 storm names selected each year, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) in America had to resort to using letters of the Greek alphabet, reaching Delta before the hurricane season ended.

Of the hurricanes that occurred in 2005, hurricane Katrina was undoubtedly the costliest ever to have struck the USA, in terms of loss of life and damage to infrastructure. Tracking the formation and path of the hurricane from Exeter, the Met Office sent forecasts and other vital weather information to the National Hurricane Center (NHC) every 12 hours, predicting the location of landfall to an accuracy of 60 km as early as three days before the hurricane struck.

As Katrina developed into a category 1 hurricane, crossing southern Florida and heading towards New Orleans, we kept the Cabinet Office, Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office fully briefed on the unfolding situation. With critical information on Katrina reaching our Embassies from the Met Office well ahead of the severe weather warnings broadcast in America, many UK citizens were evacuated from the path of the storm in good time. Our briefings were also used in directing the American public, emergency planners and government in their response to the hurricane.

Autumn

Research by the Met Office and others in the scientific and medical communities, shows that the weather has a significant impact on people's health. The Met Office predicts factors affecting the variability of infections, which helps the National Health Service (NHS) target preventative action and plan admissions and staffing requirements. Pre-emptive medical intervention of this sort ultimately reduces patients' need to go to hospital helping to conserve vital NHS resources and, more importantly, leads to improved patient care and quality of life.

A key part of our health forecasting programme involves twice-weekly risk forecasts of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) – a serious respiratory condition affecting more than 1.5 million people in the UK. COPD patients become more vulnerable from the autumn as temperatures begin to drop, and are particularly susceptible in very cold, wintry conditions. By warning NHS organisations in advance when people in their region are most at risk of a COPD exacerbation, the Met Office aids the delivery of effective preventative care. This could simply be a nurse telephoning or visiting a patient to assess their condition and then enabling a range of medical and non-medical interventions if required.

An initial trial of the service ran from November 2004 to March 2005 in eight Primary Care Trusts and, following a very positive independent review by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, it is now available to more health authorities across the UK. Already this year, it is estimated that 35,000 COPD patients have been supported through the scheme.

Part of our successful partnership saw the Met Office and NHS together produce a handbook for GPs as a guide to caring for patients with COPD, which was launched in November 2005 as the weather turned colder on the brink of winter. Surgery posters and patients' information packs completed the campaign. This revolutionary health forecasting programme was also nominated in 2005 for one of the Guardian Public Service Awards that have become a benchmark for quality in public services.

Winter

The Met Office also works in close partnership with the Highways Agency to keep the travelling public safe on England's road network.

As part of the Agency's efforts to ensure drivers receive better information about weather conditions affecting the roads, a team of Met Office forecasters are now based at the National Traffic Control Centre near Birmingham. Working alongside Agency traffic experts, our forecasters provide daily updates on the impacts of the weather on the road network; helping to provide more accurate and timely information to all road users and the media. The aim is to guide the public in making better decisions about when to travel, particularly in severe weather. We lend further support by being prominent at the Highways Agency's annual event launching its winter road maintenance programme, which is designed to provide reassurances to the media and others on measures being taken to keep the roads open in all weather conditions.

This level of inter-agency work, which sees Met Office staff loaned out to other agencies, proved particularly successful during late February and early March 2005 when widespread snow and ice affected many parts of England and Wales. During this period, a combination of early warnings, high-profile public relations, and our close working relationship with the Highways Agency – along with the Cabinet Office, the BBC and other media – ensured an effective message went out to the public and key decision-makers in Government in good time.

For the first time ever, in the following winter of 2005/06 Met Office experts updated other key groups directly on the long-range prospects for the coming winter; briefing business leaders and central Government officials on what to expect from the middle of the year. This improved contingency planners' confidence in their readiness to deal with whatever the winter had in store.

The National Archives

For further information:

T **020 8876 3444**

W **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk**



Delivering Success for Government

The national archives: digitisation of popular records

1. Central Office of Information Films

In October 2005, The National Archives, Kew, and The Central Office of Information (COI) joined forces to create an online exhibition, on The National Archives' website, of a selection of public information films from 1945–1951. The films, which would originally have been shown in cinemas across the UK and the Commonwealth, are an excellent example of how the Government communicated important messages to individuals – from how to blow your nose to prevent the spread of germs through to how to catch a London bus. They capture the key issues of the time as the Government attempted to educate the public about how to look after themselves in this difficult period. They also give an insight into post-war planning with films like 'New Town', a short film informing people how new towns would be built in order for everyone to have homes, jobs and a good education.

The online exhibition took the country by storm and achieved over 70 pieces of media coverage including BBC Online, BBC Breakfast, Have I Got News for You, This Morning and The Richard and Judy show. In the first five days from launching, web visits increased by 40 000 and many local radio stations ran phone-ins and discussions about the films. The total audience reach was just under 48 million.

James Strachan, The National Archives' head of online services and strategic marketing, said 'The films capture the country's feelings of 1945–1951, people's worries and how we were responding as a nation to the impact of the war. They are full of nostalgia for times gone by and are a great medium for educating today's generations about how the Government kept the country focused on growth and survival in a very difficult political climate.'

The project is to develop further as part of the 60th birthday celebrations of the COI, with about 60 public information films from the 1950s through to the present day being placed on the exhibition site in the spring of 2006. To view the exhibition, log onto: **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films**

2. Launch of Digital Express Trial Service

The National Archives has launched a trial service to provide digital copies of original paper records on demand. With a few exceptions, TNA will complete orders received by 13:00 on any weekday by 17:00 on the same day. This trial service has generated enough revenue from its first day to break even, with no marketing. For further information about this innovative service, see **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/legal/digitalexpress.htm**

National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS)



For further information:

T **0870 268 8100**

E **press.office@ncs.police.uk**

W **www.ncis.co.uk**

NCIS – SARs Development

The Drugs Trafficking Act 1986 established the Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) regime, creating an obligation to report suspicions of drug money laundering. In 1987 the responsibility to support the British Criminal Justice System and Asset Recovery Strategy fell to the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), housing the UK's Financial Intelligence Unit.

The volume of SARs increased exponentially from about 230 submissions in 1986 to 56 023 in 2002. The increase in volume was attributable to a number of legislative developments, culminating in the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* (POCA). There are three principal Money Laundering offences within the act (Concealing, Arranging, and Use or Possession of criminal property) which affected all crime, including tax evasion. In addition, the *Terrorism Act 2000* addresses similar offences relating to the funding of Terrorism.

In 2003 NCIS instigated a review (undertaken by KPMG) of the UK's SAR Regime in order to identify and streamline NCIS' existing key processes. The report recommended process enhancements as a way to free up valuable resources, yet despite extracting critical reports for immediate attention, the growing backlog, created by increased reporting through POCA and the updated Money Laundering Regulations 2003, represented a formidable challenge to tackle.

NCIS determined SARs could be dealt with more efficiently and economically if an externally contracted business were to capture the data in an environment dedicated to the task, in order to allow NCIS to focus on intelligence led work. Further development included implementing Data Mining Tools, to automatically categorise and prioritise reports.

At the end of 2004, a backlog of 15 000 non-critical SARs existed which were taking between three and six months to be input onto the NCIS SARs IT system (Elmer). By September 2005, system improvements were responsible for successfully clearing the backlog, despite a continuous increase in submission volumes. By January 2006, the input processing time was reduced to five days. NCIS is now processing 195 000 SARs without a backlog. This performance has demonstrated a significant improvement which has had a positive outcome for NCIS, recognised by industry and government.

Further development was implemented in June 2005 when NCIS updated its 'Money.Web' gateway (a proven Extranet mechanism for the electronic submission of SARs) to allow Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) to quickly and directly view SARs, thus potentially furthering their own investigations. By December 2005, 945 applications had been granted to 62 LEAs giving them access to Elmer via the Money.Web system.

NCIS continues to refine the methods for intelligence assessment and development by piloting a newly developed software application called 'Knowledge Manager'. This will provide an efficient data mining capability which continuously trawls the database until a successful hit is found, with the end user being immediately notified via email.

Other planned developments include the SAR Online facility within the 'Public Access System' (PAS) environment. NCIS ran a pilot scheme of this new application which allows online SAR submissions. This has demonstrated the potential to allow any of the 761 000 potential SAR reporters in the UK to report suspicions on-line. This will enable a gradual phasing out of non-standardised reports and facilitates quicker consent submissions. A satisfied Building Society Investigator recently wrote: *'this shows that by using PAS as a way of sending SARs directly into Elmer they can be picked up by local or potentially national bodies who may already be investigating this person(s) in a timely manner... I am overall very pleased with how user friendly and stable PAS has so far proved to be.'*

National Savings & Investments (NS&I)

For further information:

T **0845 964 5000**

W **www.nsandi.com**



In 2003, following an extensive and inclusive strategy review process, NS&I launched their ambitious five year growth plan under the banner Direction 2007. The essence of the plan was to deliver £15 billion additional net financing and £1.3 billion total taxpayer value, through developing enhanced customer propositions and improved accessibility through alternative channels.

Achievements to date:

- After three years of declining growth (1999–2002), NS&I has grown from £61.8 billion (Oct 2002) to £71.9 billion (December 2005) and is on track to deliver the target £15 billion growth by March 2008.
- By raising cost-effective funding for the government, NS&I has saved the taxpayer £514 million over the past two years and is on course to deliver £1.3 billion over the five-year timeline.
- Delivered our full-year net financing target for 2005–06 by the end of Quarter 3 and now on track to deliver well in excess of £4 billion net financing for the full year.

Achieved by:

Developing our channels

With a focus on reducing our reliance on the Post Office®, such significant growth has allowed us to sustain high sales activity with the Post Office (£6.5 billion p.a.), whilst also developing alternative channels:

- projected telephony sales of £1.9 billion per annum for 2005–06 (18% of total sales) up from £500 million in 2002–03.
- projected internet sales of £1.3 billion per annum for 2005–06 (12%) from a standing start in 2002–03.
- gaining a high street presence with a radical new marketing partnership with Tesco® that will see the Premium Bonds and Inflation-beating savings certificates for sale in Tesco stores throughout the UK from March 2006.

Enhancing our customer propositions:

- All but two products now available to customers via the call centre and the website.
- Increasing holding limits on Premium Bonds, Savings Certificates and Children's Bonus Bonds.
- Eliminating the 90 day notice period on Income Bonds.
- Replacing the 143 year old Ordinary Account with the new Easy Access Savings Account offering improved accessibility and higher interest rates (for example, for £1 000, interest rates increased from 0.95% to 3.25%).
- Introduction of a second £1 million jackpot (July 2005)
- First nationwide TV campaign in six years for Premium Bonds and Inflation Beating Savings fronted by Sir Alan Sugar in July 2005.

Improving the service we provide to our customers:

- Service levels consistently at over 99% via our partnership with Siemens® Business Services. Average response times improving from nine days to four (1999–2006).
- NS&I joined the Banking Code in March 2003 and the Financial Ombudsman Service in September 2005 which affirms that we are operating in line with best practice across the financial services sector.
- Re-accreditation of Charter Mark achieved for the third time in 2004 with the assessors commending us for best practice in a number of areas.
- Development of a third Customer Interaction Centre at Glasgow site, expanding the capacity and capability of our virtual call centre to 280 seats (up from 120 seats in 2003).

Focusing on our People:

All achieved while investing heavily in our people and working environment. This was borne out by our employee attitude survey which achieved a 100% response rate in November 2005 when 70% of staff said that NS&I is a *'great place to work'*. This was further validated by achieving our third re-accreditation for Investors in People in March 2005, quoting the assessment report *'a successful business – a relatively small team with the capacity to make a huge impact!'*

External recognition of some of our successes:**Design Effectiveness Awards 2005:**

Top award for website effectiveness

IFS Innovation awards 2004:

Grand Prix award & Most Effective Back Office initiative award

Call Centre Association (CCA) Excellence Awards 2005:

Best in sector award for Financial Services

Money Observer Awards 2004:

Best ISA Provider of the Year

CACI awards October 2005:

Best Work by a Database Bureau award

Prima Baby Awards 2004:

Winner of Best Value Awards in Children Savings Plan category

National Weights and Measures Laboratory (NWML)

For further information:
 T +44(0)20 8943 7220
 E niall.boyle@nwml.gov.uk
 W www.nwml.gov.uk



National Weights and Measures Laboratory (NWML) approves beer dispense system to be used in a major new football stadium

NWML's 'one-stop shop' for industry

IMI Cornelius⁴ – manufacturers of beverage dispense solutions – benefit from being able to deal with one Agency, NWML, an Executive Agency of the DTI for a number of different services, including Type Approval and Testing, Quality Management certification and Self Verification. This has allowed IMI Cornelius greater flexibility in their manufacturing process and helped them get their products to market as quickly as possible.

Fast turnaround times to support Stadium deadlines

IMI Cornelius submitted a fast flow beer dispense system to NWML for Type Approval and Testing in December 2005, and certification is currently being prepared³. These systems will be used in a major new football stadium¹. The dispense unit⁵ will deliver a measured pint of beer in six seconds – an essential feature in situations where large numbers of people must be served in a short space of time, such as at half time in football matches. To enable use at UK football venues, the beer dispense unit must be certified by NWML to deliver precisely measured quantities into unstamped soft plastic glasses. Construction of the stadium is already underway and delivery of systems commences February for commissioning in April. It was therefore vital that the certification was complete before March 2006.

NWML is accustomed to working within manufacturers' tight deadlines and offers help and advice right from design stage through to Type Approval. Our job is to guide the manufacturers through the various stages of the Type Approval process so that they can get their products to market with a minimum of delay.

NWML - Accredited Certification Body Service (ACB)

NWML offers advice and consultancy to businesses wishing to seek an approval to conduct 'self verification' whereby they can apply the 'crown stamp' verification mark to their products themselves. This can significantly reduce costs of placing a new product on the market. NWML can conduct its own assessment of a company's quality system for those businesses which do not possess a certified quality system, in order for the business to gain approval to conduct self-verification. NWML has UKAS accreditation for its Accredited Certification Body service, and can certify quality management systems to the ISO9000 series of standards and has done so for IMI Cornelius. IMI Cornelius also manufacture over three quarters of a million 'OpticTM spirit measures' a year and their site at Leicester is approved for self verification of these²

Notes:

* 1. NWML has been requested not to make specific title reference or to identify the particular stadium for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

* 2. The word 'Optic' is a registered trade name for the Gaskell and Chambers (a division of IMI plc) spirit measures. It should always be shown in text as 'OpticTM spirit measure'.

3. IMI Cornelius recently submitted a Fast flow beer dispense system to NWML for Type Approval and Testing. Intoxicating Liquor measuring equipment require a UK National Type Approval certificate to enable them to be used for trade purposes in the UK (Section 7 *Weights & Measures Act 1985*) for the measurement of beers, or of the prescribed spirits (i.e. Gin, Rum, Vodka & Whisky). NWML is the issuing authority for UK National Type Approval Certificates.

4. IMI Cornelius is a core division of UK-based international engineering solutions group IMI plc, providing major brand customers with innovative beverage dispense solutions and after-sales support capabilities worldwide.

5. This particular beer dispense system, designated 'Ultra-Flow', has been designed to deliver one pint measures of beer in six seconds under controlled conditions. The unit monitors gas pressure and availability of beer to prevent foam appearing in the supply lines. It incorporates a beer chilling system operating at 2 degrees Celsius and can be programmed to work with automatic keg change and cleaning systems. The system records volume of drinks dispensed and can be linked to stock control electronic point of sale systems. 180 single units have been working successfully in Sazka ice hockey stadium Prague for 18 months where no volume certification requirement exists. They are able to provide every one of the 14 000 spectators with a glass of Staropramen lager in a 15 minute interval.

Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)

For further information:

T **01925 400100**

E **info@nwda.co.uk**

W **www.nwda.co.uk**



The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) is responsible for the sustainable economic development and regeneration of England's Northwest and has five key priorities: Business Development, Regeneration, Skills & Employment, Infrastructure and Image.

Improving business performance in order to secure economic growth is a high priority for the NWDA. While economic development is a significant strategic priority for the Agency, sustainable development is at the heart of our vision.

Since the Regional Development Agency's (RDA) inception in 1999 we have done much to fulfil our sustainability commitments and we continue to ensure an appropriate balance between economic development and sustainability.

Established in 2001, ENWORKS, the Northwest-based environmental business support programme, is being delivered through a network of local business advisors. These advisors help small to medium sized companies increase their competitiveness by making environmental improvements. Companies are supported through the ENWORKS network to increase resource efficiency by reducing their use of water, energy and raw materials.

Supported by the NWDA and the European Regional Development Fund, ENWORKS has given advice and support to more than 3 600 businesses. This advice has resulted in over 2 400 environmental policies and action plans being put in place by Northwest businesses, leading to over 3 300 jobs being created or safeguarded. Over 1 100 people have also gained formal qualifications.

ENWORKS' support of Northwest businesses has also resulted in 38 000 tonnes of waste being diverted from landfill and the recycling of 200 000 tonnes of construction waste. During the last 15 months, ENWORKS has helped companies save over £7.4 million through Resource Efficiency, saving 35 000 tonnes of CO₂, 360 000 m³ of water and over 2.2 million tonnes of raw materials per annum.

ENWORKS has also recently been recognised on the European stage as a regeneration success story. At the European Commission's 'Competitive Regions – Shaping Best Practice' seminar in Germany – the programme was selected as an example of best practice, meeting the Commission's recommendations that projects should clearly foster the principle of sustainable development.

OGCbuying.solutions



For further information:

T **0870 268 2222**

E **custcare@ogcbs.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.ogcbuyingsolutions.gov.uk**

Delivering Success for Government

OGCbuying.solutions is an Executive Agency of the Office of Government Commerce in the Treasury. We provide our customers in the public sector with the reassurance of a tried and tested route to products and services they need, to maximise procurement efficiency and value for money. In this way we help to deliver savings which can then be reallocated to front line support and initiatives. In essence we let framework agreements and deliver managed services solutions through open OJEU competition which Central Civil Government (CCG) and the wider public sector can then make use of.

We operate as a trading fund and are entirely dependent upon public sector organisations choosing to use us, rather than set in place their own framework agreements or contracts. Operating primarily (although not entirely) in the commodity goods marketplace we offer value for money, legislative compliance and environmental compliance: using best practice procurement procedures and working in collaboration with others we have grown the business at a rate the private sector would be highly jealous of.

During 2002-03 we had £1.1 billion of customer orders being placed through our frameworks and managed services; by March 2005 the annual customer spend was over £2 billion and we are now on course to achieve £2.6 billion in the 2005-06 FY. Of course, customer spend in itself is not the purpose or insular aim of the Agency – we are focused strongly on delivering savings for the public sector. In using the frameworks we have proven benchmarks which demonstrate the savings made by using Buying Solutions and on a quarterly basis we let our major customers know what savings have been achieved and these are counted towards department's efficiency gains and central targets.

Again the increase in savings achieved has been astonishing. Since March 2003 savings achieved through our frameworks has increased by almost 150% from £1.63 million to £400 million. So has the resource required to deliver these savings proportionately added to the base cost? The clear answer is no. From a staffing level of 221 in 2003 we have only needed to increase our staffing cadre by 25% (or 57). We have managed to contain our costs by a number of means:

- Defining our vision and values and investing in an extensive staff development programme to entrench the values into the organisation. Trust, outward looking, rigour, can-do and helpfulness are values that are referenced and used as part of normal working life in the Agency.
- Focused promotion and effective communication of our services to CCG and the wider public sector.
- Managing our supplier base and getting good deals in place.
- Collaborating with partners in the public sector to ensure what we do complements, and is in partnership with, other public buying organisations. These have included National Health Service Purchasing and Supply Agency (NHS PASA), Driving Standards Agency (DSA), Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and more recently the newly established Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs).
- Benchmarking of our products and services to ensure we are still competitive and getting real value for money.
- Being proactive in the government's sustainability agenda and measuring our supplier products against environmental concerns.
- Using procurement best practice techniques.

All these elements have contributed to the fantastic and demonstrable success of our Agency and contribute towards our vision of Savings for the Nation.

One NorthEast (RDA)

For further information:

T **0191 229 6200**

E **enquiries@onenortheast.co.uk**

W **www.pdports.co.uk**



Regional Development
Agency

Teesport and the Logistics and Distribution Sector

Teesport, the largest deep water port on the east coast, handles around 6 000 vessels and 50 million tonnes of cargo per annum. The port is the second largest by volume in the UK and a key component of the North East's transport and business infrastructure. It provides almost 2 000 core and directly related jobs, accounting for around 2.6% of Tees Valley employment, and contributes around £250 million annually to the region's economy. It is critical to the success of the major industry sectors in Tees Valley, including the 12 000 jobs in the chemical processing industries. Teesport has the capability to handle rapidly increasing opportunities in European and Scandinavian trade, and to enhance prospects for future investment within the region.

An excellent example of the port's contribution to inclusive, economic growth is the proposed new Deep Sea Container Terminal, involving £300 million private sector investment. This would increase levels of economic participation through the creation of around 500 new direct jobs, and potentially 4 000 indirect jobs within ports, logistics and shipping sectors.

A further 3 000 jobs could be created from additional import and distribution centres. The first of these is already being built by Gazeley, where the £20 million phase 1 investment will create 300 jobs. Full completion is expected to create up to 450 jobs and lay the platform for further investment in warehousing activities, provided that full intermodal capability with an emphasis on rail is available. It is also important to note that logistics and distribution is a key enabling sector, as well as a sector in its own right requiring appropriate return on investment-tested interventions in infrastructure and training.¹

The economic significance of this investment for the region, along with the potential to relieve 'Southern Discomfort', will be argued by partners directly to Government and via the Northern Way process. This approach is fully supported within the Regional Economic Strategy.

1. In the North East, Distribution sector employment was estimated at 61 000 in 2005 and forecast to grow to 64 200 by 2015. Cambridge Econometrics (July 2005).

Ordnance Survey



For further information:

T **08456 05 05 05**

E **customerservices@ordnancesurvey.co.uk**

W **www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk**

Access land

Last year – 2005 – saw the conclusion of a programme to roll out areas of England and Wales designated with new access opportunities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This prompted the revision of 251 OS Explorer Maps, more than half the entire series, to reflect the extent of mountain, heath, moor and registered common land now considered as open country.

The project saw a long-standing collaboration between Ordnance Survey, the Countryside Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales to define and designate access land. OS MasterMap®, Ordnance Survey's large scale definitive mapping database for Great Britain, was the intelligent reference dataset used in the initial identification and mapping of access areas to draw the open country maps.

Production schedules were dramatically compressed to prepare, check, print and distribute the OS Explorer Maps as close as possible to the regional roll-out dates, acknowledging their importance in illustrating the extent of access land not only for walkers but also for landowners, farmers and rural residents.

OS Explorer Maps are also the series made available to Year 7 in England and Wales and Primary 7 in Scotland, under our Free maps for 11-year-olds initiative. Now in its fourth year, the scheme has supplied a total of over three million maps since it commenced, with 750 000 distributed this year alone.

Ordnance Survey has:

- clearly indicated land designated with new access opportunities on all OS Explorer Maps of England and Wales;
- made the revised data available in digital form for use on pocket navigation equipment and websites as well as the OS Select™ site-centred mapping service;
- endeavoured to reflect the precise launch schedule of access opportunities in its map production as closely as possible; and
- merged the extent of new access land identified by the Countryside Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales in a clear and unified way, with existing access areas owned by landowners, including The National Trust®, The Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust.

Data collection

Achieving optimum data-collection efficiencies are paramount to the delivery of timely, accurate, digital geographic information (GI). Our data is captured on the ground via a network of 285 field surveyors and through aerial photography by our photogrammetric team. Both facets have experienced a boost in efficiency through the implementation of new infrastructure technology to swiftly and accurately capture and deliver data.

The development of a Global Positioning System (GPS) correction network, the country's most comprehensive civilian framework for correcting signals from orbiting satellites, has delivered a range of positioning services both in real time and for post-process applications. The network is available across Great Britain, with nearly 100 GPS base stations contributing data to a server hub at head office. The network improves the standard accuracy of raw GPS readings and has generated efficiencies for field staff of up to 40%, enabling centimetre-level positioning for data collection operations. Beyond Ordnance Survey, potential users include civil engineers, surveying and construction companies and utilities. We have invited partners to derive their own positioning services from the network, creating GPS correction products to suit their customers' specific requirements and technology.

The implementation of a digital mapping camera and imagery data management solution has delivered a seamless digital workflow for our aerial imagery capture. Aerial photography collected via this precision digital camera is processed within an integrated environment. This allows associated photogrammetric information,

such as imagery metadata, flight planning data and ground control, to be effectively managed and distributed. The new technology has delivered distinct operational advantages, both in the quality of the information collected and the reduced time taken from image acquisition to data extraction.

The new infrastructure has:

- boosted the data collection efficiencies of staff in the field by up to 40%;
- prompted an upgrade to our free GPS website (www.gps.gov.uk) to deliver raw GPS data from the network for use by professionals, including surveyors, asset managers and engineers;
- streamlined the delivery of real-time data to customers from one central server, safeguarding accuracy through direct data flow;
- enhanced the quality of photogrammetric imagery and streamlined its delivery to customers; and
- speeded the delivery of captured data for processing and subsequent customer distribution and use.

NHS (England) Pilot Agreement

We have launched a pilot agreement giving more than 600 NHS™ organisations in England access to our most detailed digital GI. They include primary care trusts, strategic health authorities, NHS trusts, cancer registries and ambulance trusts. The agreement with the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) delivers data to support strategic decisions on investment priorities, resource allocation, estate planning and the provision of public health advice. It can be used to help identify health inequalities, record changes to patient catchment areas, carry out epidemiological analysis and target services to clinical hot spots.

This groundbreaking 17-month agreement will help promote and support the use of computerised mapping across health organisations. Health service managers can use the data to support their policies, particularly with regards to the allocation of facilities and resources and the routing of mobile services.

Organisations not currently using GI can explore the benefits the use of GI can deliver ahead of longer-term procurement, while those already using it have access to a wider portfolio of digital data.

The portfolio encompasses small-scale mapping of regional areas to more detailed coverage of local areas, including street-level, postcode and spatial address data. Products based on OS MasterMap data, specifically designed to be managed as a fully integrated corporate database, are also available.

The NHS (England) Pilot Agreement:

- supplies a comprehensive portfolio of geographic data to a range of NHS organisations to underpin existing and potential services;
- encourages the use of GI by health sector staff;
- delivers GI to staff across health organisations, adding valuable context to existing datasets and boosting their functionality;
- enables NHS staff to share their own datasets with local and central government, promoting interoperability and reuse of information; and
- introduces location data to organisations unfamiliar with its use and delivers comprehensive real-time GI to existing users to give them access to up-to-date information.

Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI)

For further information:

T **028 9025 5747**

E **info@mosaic-ni.gov.uk**

W **www.osni.gov.uk**



Mosaic

Mosaic is the brand name for the implementation of the Northern Ireland Geographic Information Strategy, an initiative being taken forward by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure through its agency, Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI). The aim of Mosaic is to help:

- deliver better services;
- manage resources more effectively and efficiently; and
- inform policy and decision making processes.

Over a two-year funding period from March 2004 to March 2006, Mosaic has taken forward a number of pilot projects to help demonstrate the benefits that can be realised from a practical co-ordinated approach to the way geographic information is collected, combined, disseminated and used.

The Utilities & Networks group within Mosaic has utilised the infrastructure of the Mosaic Pilots to leverage substantial benefits by sharing their network information online. Data is presented within an access-controlled online GIS which includes pdf printing, address searching and querying functionality.

Network Information has been provided by the following organisations:

- Water Service
- Northern Ireland Electricity
- Phoenix Natural Gas
- Road Service
- NTL
- Rivers Agency

The project makes data available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week to help the participants ensure that each utility has the most up to date information on each others' plant and infrastructure, minimising the potential for accidents or infrastructure damage.

The information can be used by Utilities and their agents to:

- contribute to best working practices covered by HSG47 (Avoiding Danger around Underground Services);
- provide an out-of-hours data provision service;
- access all the Utility information on any web-enabled computer; and
- reduce duplication of existing data distribution practices.

The Patent Office

For further information:

T **08459 500 505**

E **enquiries@patent.gov.uk**

W **www.patent.gov.uk**



Making litigation cheaper and more accessible

The Patent Office is an Executive Agency of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) responsible for the national framework of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), namely patents, designs, trade marks and copyright.

Intellectual Property Rights are vital assets for business, but disputes over them can cost time and money, and can be particularly troublesome for small businesses. Extensive consultation with users has led to the introduction by the Patent Office of two important changes in the handling of patents and trade mark disputes.

The common aim of these changes is to enable businesses to have an early sight of the strength and value of their own patent and trade mark rights and those of their competitors and to be in a position to make timely and informed business decisions accordingly.

Users made it clear during consultations that what they wanted from the Patent Office was something different from the existing formal dispute resolution procedures before tribunals and courts. In particular they wanted something that would make things easier for small businesses.

In response, the Office has introduced legislation to provide two brand new services for helping businesses resolve patent and trade mark disputes. The services are quick, cheap and authoritative.

On patents, the new service, the Opinions service, focuses on the two most important areas of dispute – whether a product infringes a patent and whether a patent is valid. All interested parties have the opportunity to put their case, but there is no formal hearing or trial. Instead the Office issues a non-binding, but fully reasoned and authoritative opinion, thus providing a quick route to alternative dispute resolution.

The new service has the particular advantage that in consequence it has attracted wide interest since its inception in October 2005 – including good coverage in the press and on the web – and requests have started to come in from businesses large and small.

On trade marks, the Preliminary Indication (PI) was introduced in May 2004. A PI is an opinion given as a matter of course by one of the Registrar's Principal Hearing Officer's in cases where a trade mark application is the subject of an opposition and where the opponent has an earlier registered trade mark which he considers to be at least similar and which is protected for the same or similar goods as those for which the applicant is seeking protection. These are the most common grounds of opposition and account for 75% of the 900 or so oppositions filed each year.

Some 490 PIs have been issued and in over 40% of these cases the parties have accepted the PI and have either settled (and the opposition withdrawn and the application amended) or have allowed the dispute to be abandoned.

It is important to emphasise that under both of these new services, the rights of parties to go ahead with formal patent or trade mark proceedings are in no way prejudiced. The new services, however, are expected to save users as much as £10 million a year in litigation costs.

Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD)

For further information:

T 01904 640 500

E information@psd.defra.gsi.gov.uk

W www.pesticides.gov.uk



Pesticide Safety Directorate's international work

The Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD) is an Executive Agency of Defra responsible for the authorisation of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) in the UK. As part of this process PSD undertakes the technical evaluation of data submitted in support of PPPs used in agriculture, horticulture and the garden, both at a national and EU level, and is also responsible for controls on the use of such products (i.e. post authorisation monitoring and enforcement). In addition, PSD provides a full policy support function (including legislation) to UK Ministers and a full information service for all stakeholders. In all instances our aim is to ensure protection of operators, consumers and the environment.

The quality of PSD's scientific expertise and service delivery is highly respected internationally, and we regularly participate in high-profile projects at both a European and wider international level, often working as the lead organisation. We have been particularly successful in the provision of training and support to regulatory authorities both within and outside the EU.

PSD is fully supportive of the Enlargement process and is an active participant in Twinning activities. In recent years we have provided the technical expertise on PPP regulation for Twinning (PHARE/Twinning Light/CARDS) projects in Czech Republic (2), Hungary (1), Slovenia (2), Slovak Republic (2), Turkey (1), Latvia (1), Poland (1), Bulgaria (1), Croatia (1), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1). For seven of these projects PSD was selected to be the project leader. We have also participated in nine TAIEX-funded activities providing technical support for Slovenia, Bulgaria, Estonia and Hungary. This was achieved by hosting study visits to the UK; providing speakers for TAIEX seminars or sending experts to beneficiary countries to deliver technical training.

Outside the EU, PSD has provided considerable support to the EU-funded PIP programme which is being administered by COLEACP. Expertise has been provided on various aspects of PPP regulation with PSD staff visiting Regulatory Authorities in Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda. We have also hosted UK study visits for experts from each of those countries along with representatives from Jamaica and St Lucia, enabling the visitors to gain an understanding of the EU regulatory process and the science underpinning the system. The training also highlighted the implications for the use of PPPs in their countries with regard to the export of food produce to the EU.

PSD believes there are considerable benefits to be derived from participation in international training programmes both at an organisational and staff development level. As an organisation, we have made many strong and positive alliances with new and acceding Member States, building and enhancing our reputation with Regulatory Authorities in the EU and beyond. We have supported countries during the accession process and have continued to do so, once they have joined the EU. By doing this we have certainly strengthened our negotiating position at a Brussels level. Participation has also facilitated the exchange of procedures and ideas, enabling us to ensure that our processes and procedures follow best practice. Our staff have enhanced their interpersonal skills, gained confidence in their own skills and expertise and been given an opportunity to participate in something other than their day to day work. We would certainly recommend participation in overseas training as an option that other Agency's may wish to consider if they have not done so already.

The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (QEIIICC)



For further information:

T **020 7222 5000**

E **info@qeiiicc.co.uk**

W **www.qeiiicc.co.uk**

The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (QEIIICC) was opened by Her Majesty the Queen in 1986. Trading Fund status was granted in April 1997. Following its opening, the QEIIICC has recorded many achievements, and notably now in this twentieth year of operations, another record is set to be established – the agency is on course for one of the best ever financial performances and to produce a record net surplus on its ordinary activities.

The trading performance of the agency reflects a strong performance across all market sectors in which the agency is involved. Some 400 professional meetings, from both public and private sector organisations, will have taken place in the current financial year, representing an extensive cross section of the national agenda that will have been platformed from the QEIIICC during 2005. Considerable positive media attention was obtained from the use of press facilities at the QEIIICC by the G7 and G8 meetings of finance ministers.

The conference rooms at the QEIIICC were extensively used throughout the year by almost all departments of state and their respective agencies, as well as by local government and numerous national and international trade and industry bodies. The use of the QEIIICC facilities for AGMs and EGMs was robust, with companies such as P&O®, Tesco®, Barclays® Bank and Vodaphone® booking space. The QEIIICC was utilised extensively as the press centre during the London Bombings in July.

The strategy of the agency is to continue to meet the financial objectives of the Trading Fund order and at the same time retain a position in the market as a premium quality, internationally acclaimed facility for both government and non-government meetings. The agency operates 'off vote' and is able to invest each year from its own cash resources in new technology and enhancements to the infrastructure that keeps the conference facilities both relevant and up to date.

The QEIIICC has recorded considerable success with its policy on recycling and energy efficiency; the agency has also during the year implemented improvements to its health and safety, diversity and equality programmes to ensure best practice.

Transport Scotland

For further information:

T **0141 272 7100**

E **info@transportscotland.gis.gov.uk**

W **www.transportscotland.gov.uk**



Transport Scotland started work as an agency of the Scottish Executive on 1 January 2006. The organisation has achieved much that can be considered a success in the transition from a Government Department to an agency prior to its establishment.

It is just over two years when the first consultation on the proposal to establish a transport agency for Scotland took place and just around 18 months since work began to create Transport Scotland.

There were three challenges to be met. Firstly to ensure 'business as usual' for the existing functions of the Scottish Executive Transport Group – some of whose role and responsibilities would transfer to the new agency; secondly to ensure the smooth transition of those roles to the agency; and thirdly to create an agency that was fully functional by the end of 2005.

The Scottish Executive Transport Group was responsible for the management of the trunk road network in Scotland and for major rail projects – this responsibility passed to the agency on 1 January. Work continued throughout the transition to agency status. The evidence of the successful management during an unsettling period of change for the staff is demonstrated by achievements such as the recent announcement on the continued development of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route road project. This is of strategic importance for the immediate area and Scotland as a whole. And on the tracks, a new rail route between Lanarkshire and Glasgow was officially opened in December last year. The new Larkhall to Milngavie branch line was completed on time and on budget.

A major HR exercise to assist staff with the move from the Scottish Executive to the agency and in parallel to this a major recruitment exercise to fill posts for new responsibilities such as the management of concessionary fares were both successfully undertaken.

Finally the target of Transport Scotland being fully functional and ready for business on 1 January 2006 was achieved. By the end of 2005 new staff had been recruited and posts moving to the agency identified. The national headquarters had been agreed and a building in Glasgow is currently being fitted out ready for occupation in the spring. And a corporate identity and positive bold symbol under which we will operate was created. On 1 January our establishment as the new national transport agency for Scotland was marked with the publication of our first Corporate Plan and Framework Document. The Corporate Plan sets out how we will monitor delivery and measure success in the future.

Registers of Scotland

For further information:

T **0845 607 0161**

E **customer_relations@ros.gov.uk**

W **www.ros.gov.uk**

REGISTERS OF SCOTLAND
Executive Agency



Information about Scotland's land & property

Efficiency and Customer Service

Registers of Scotland is the Government Department responsible for registering a variety of legal documents in Scotland. It was established as an Executive Agency in 1990 and became a Trading Fund in 1996. The Agency is currently responsible for 15 public registers in Scotland. Our work is dominated by the two main registers that relate to rights in land – the Land Register of Scotland and the General Register of Sasines.

Since becoming a Trading Fund the volume of registration work the Agency processes has doubled to around half a million registration transactions each year. The current annual value of transactions dealt with (and mainly guaranteed) is in excess of £33 billion.

In addition the volume of information we provide from these registers has substantially increased with the user base changing from a small number of specialist firms serving the legal profession to a much larger user community that includes other Government Departments, the Police, local authorities and individuals.

To meet these new demands, Registers of Scotland has improved substantially the speed and quality of the service it provides to all its customers.

Since becoming a Trading Fund the Agency has:

- completed the progressive roll out of the Land Register in 2003 to cover the whole of Scotland, providing improved property rights to citizens;
- established well used customer service centres;
- launched in 2001 a very successful web-based service that allows users to search the registers directly with around 1.6 million hits per year and growing;
- improved turnaround times for registration, for our largest volume transactions by 77%;
- improved output per member of staff by 85%;
- reduced our information fees by 9% in 2005 with significant reductions planned in 2006–07 for registration fees;
- improved customer satisfaction levels to 99% being satisfied or very satisfied with our overall service;
- achieved a consistently high accuracy level over the last five years of over 98% in our registration work;
- played a key role in furthering the Scottish Executive's and Parliament's land reform agenda by administering the Register of Community Interests in Land and dealing with the effects of Feudal Abolition on land registration.

All of this has been achieved by constantly evolving our business processes, in particular by adopting IT enabled improvements, for example digital mapping, that allow our staff to deliver higher levels of output while improving speed and quality of service.

We have ambition. Our vision is to be recognised as one of the most effective and efficient land registries in the world. To this end further major improvements to how we deal with registration and also provision of associated information are being taken forward as an integrated change programme with our IT partner, British Telecom. One central initiative is our Automated Registration of Title project (ARTL) which will enable electronic submission and processing of registration transactions. Through ARTL we will also collect Stamp Duty Land Tax on behalf of the Inland Revenue in what will be a substantial joining up of service delivery.

Roads Service



For further information:

T **028 9054 0540**

E **roads@drdni.gov.uk**

W **www.roadsni.gov.uk**

The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 for Northern Ireland

Following the endorsement of Northern Ireland's Department for Regional Development's (DRD) Regional Transportation Strategy by the Northern Ireland Assembly in July 2002, DRD commenced the development of three Transport Plans needed to implement the strategy, namely: the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP); the Regional Strategic Transport Plan (RSTN TP); and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP).

The RSTN TP is a multi-modal plan and covers the main transport network of the region. It sets out the proposals to maintain, manage and develop the strategic transport network and the related services over the plan period 2002–2015. The strategic network includes the motorway and trunk roads and the whole railway network in Northern Ireland. The Department's Roads Service led the development of all three plans.

The Transport Plans Management Group, chaired by Dr Malcolm McKibbin, Roads Service Chief Executive, provided oversight of the plan preparation. A senior member of the Roads Service staff headed the project team for the development of RSTN TP. The project team included representatives of DRD Core Directorates responsible for Strategic Planning and the Public Transport Division, Planning Service Agency and Translink, the public transport provider in Northern Ireland. Much of the work of the development of the plan was undertaken in the respective branches under the direction of the Project Team. Consultants were also commissioned to review and assess potential capital projects and undertake modelling of the draft plans using the Northern Ireland Strategic Transport Model (NISTRM); an AM peak model also used in the development of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The modelling outcomes identified the main environmental impacts and the modal shift resulting from the plan proposals.

Significant consultation was undertaken during the early plan development stage, including written consultation with all local MPs, MLAs and District Councils. A Working Conference on the contents of the Emerging RSTN TP was held in September 2003. Over 170 delegates representing all 26 local councils, political parties, business, private developers, academic institutions, consumer groups, community and environmental groups, trade unions, government departments and statutory agencies attended the conference. Minister of State, John Spellar MP, gave the opening address, which was followed by presentations from Jack Cargo, DRD Roads Service and David Connolly, MVA Consultants. Workshop sessions facilitated challenge and discussions engaging the stakeholders.

A report of the conference, prepared by the independent facilitators was circulated to all those who attended the conference enabling ownership of the outcomes. The plan period was extended to 2015 and the content of the plan amended in response to submissions made. The draft plan and Equality Impact Assessment was subject to statutory Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) consultation in Summer 2004 and the final plan was approved by the Minister in January 2005 and launched by the Minister with a comprehensive presentation to over 100 delegates in March 2005.

All key stakeholders welcomed the plan as a clear statement of Government's plans for the development of the transport services and improvement to the strategic network. This has been underlined by early implementation of a number of the plan projects including the delivery and commissioning of new buses and trains and the upgrading of services. The programme of major road works has also been accelerated due to increased funding and together these improvements have built confidence in the plan and increased public support for the full implementation of the proposals.

Scottish Court Service

For further information:

T **0131 229 9200**

E **enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk**

W **www.scotcourts.gov.uk**



High Court Reform

As a consequence of High Court Reforms introduced in April 2005, we have seen major improvements in both the efficiency of the High Court and the manner in which victims of crime, witnesses and jurors are now treated.

The introduction of a preliminary hearing before a High Court judge has sharply reduced the number of trials which have to be adjourned and the number of witnesses cited to attend the High Court. Many victims of crime no longer need to attend court as approximately 50% of all High Court cases now plead guilty at the preliminary stages of the proceedings. Where cases do proceed to trial, the introduction of fixed trial dates has introduced greater certainty for both practitioners and those who attend the High Court as witnesses or jurors. Over 80% of cases set down for trial are now dealt with as planned, compared to over 80% being adjourned or postponed during 2004–05

The success of the reforms was largely due to excellent cooperation between all of the key parties, developed through joint project development and an extensive programme of seminars before the changes were introduced. In addition, the reforms were supported by an IT infrastructure that included a case tracking system and electronic diary to programme the business of the High Court. A full independent evaluation is underway.

Small Business Service



For further information:

T **020 7215 5000**

E **gatewayenquiries@sbs.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.sbs.gov.uk**

The UK has record numbers of small businesses: around 4.3 million – over 99% of all businesses. That's 600 000 more than a decade ago, and almost double the number a generation ago. With the UK rated the most entrepreneurial of the large EU economies – ahead of France, Germany and Italy – over 1 500 new businesses start every working day. The UK has the lowest business failure rates since records began in 1993, with over 90% surviving the first year.

The Small Business Service leads in government to make the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a business. Its award-winning portal **www.businesslink.gov.uk** which the UN world summit award recently described as the '*UK's best business website for best e-content application*' has over 500,000 unique visitors every month. More widely, Business Link performance has been transformed: in four years the annual number of customers has doubled (now 670 000 including over 168 000 pre-starts), and customer satisfaction has risen by ten points to 90%.

The Small Business Service's push to champion UK enterprise and entrepreneurship includes major backing of Enterprise Insight and Enterprise Week. Over 158 000 people took part in the 2005 Week.

And in Spring 2006 the Small Business Service launched a major new national procurement portal to help businesses access lower-value, local and central government contracts. The value of sub-OJEU tender opportunities is worth as much as £28 billion-plus per year, representing around nine million transactions. The portal acts as a 'consolidator' of these opportunities, making them accessible to businesses, in one place.

Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)



For further information:

T **0845 111 1711**

E **saas.geu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk**

W **www.student-support-saas.gov.uk**

We support Scottish students in Higher Education and deal with around 130 000 applications every year. Because of the timing of Higher examinations and the beginning of the academic year, most applications come in between April and October. In the past, we had two seasonal peaks in May and August which created backlogs and slowed down the rate at which we could process applications. This in turn led to an increase in mail and telephone inquiries which slowed the work rate even further leading to yet more mail and 'phone traffic – in other words a downward spiral.

We have resolved this over the last five years by a combination of new technology and a fundamental re-design of our business processes. We introduced online applications in 2002 (three years ahead of the rest of the UK). These applications go straight into our operating system and reduce the time caseworkers formerly spent keying in data. Around 24% of students now apply in this way and we expect to increase the number later this year when we start accepting electronic signatures.

Complementing the online system, we have invested in an electronic data management system which uses optical character recognition to scan data from paper applications directly into our operating system. This too has freed up caseworker time allowing staff to concentrate on quality assurance and the resolution of complex cases.

Over and above these measures, we have redesigned the application process for students in the second and later years of their courses. We have reduced the length of the application form for such students from 28 pages to two. The forms are also pre-populated with the previous year's details so that all the student has to do is edit them rather than enter from scratch. Use of these forms has enabled us to eliminate the May work peak and, by processing more applications earlier in the year, to be in a position to tackle the August peak without creating backlogs.

The results of these improvements have been dramatic. We have reduced the average time taken to process an application from over 28 days to 11. Because we process so quickly, we have been able to dispense altogether with the acknowledgement letters we used to have to send to every applicant. We no longer work overtime throughout the season and staff turnover has reduced from 25% in 1999 to around 4% in 2005. Because of the efficiency gains we have made, we have been able to take on substantial, additional business (Individual Learning Accounts Scotland and Graduate Endowment collection) without any increase in staffing.

Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA)



For further information:

T **0870 6060 440**

W **www.vosa.gov.uk**

VOSA delivers a range of activities, which support our customers' efforts to remain compliant with current and new licensing, vehicle and traffic legislation. We identify and target those who are not compliant, with a view to helping them become compliant or, in the extreme stop them operating. Our overall purpose is embodied in our organisational aim: contributing to the improvement of road safety, environmental standards and the reduction of vehicle crime.

Working with customers – Introduction of a Service Level Agreement with Trade Associations

The first VOSA Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Vehicle Testing was signed on 7 December 2004 with the three main operating trade associations. The SLA set out a range of service improvements as a response to the trades' cooperation in accepting a three-year package of test-fee increases which began in 2003. The package was based on funding major estate improvements and service improvements. The SLA was seen by all concerned as a positive step forward and presented an opportunity for the parties involved to articulate their expectations and review and negotiate further developments.

The SLA was publicised through the trade associations, in articles in 'Moving On' (VOSA's newsletter for HGV and PSV operators) and in the Account Holders letter and on the VOSA website. It was also referred to in the VOSA Business Plan 2005/06.

As part of the 2005/06 fees round, an update on the SLA was published and circulated to the trade. This gave the trade confidence that VOSA was listening and acting, in return the trade accepted the third and final year of the fees increase package.

In many ways the items included in the SLA and our progress report were part of our ongoing strategy to improve testing services to our customers but by featuring them in the SLA we were able to publicise the activities, raising their profile within VOSA and across the trade bodies. We were also able to work with the trade to ensure these were the services they wanted.

These have included the pilot of an Account Manager trial which has received much praise from the trade bodies. Initially it focused on building relationships, mutual trust and understanding of the issues that both operators and VOSA staff face on day-to-day basis. Publication of the Test Station refurbishment programme not only kept operators informed but helps them understand some of the tactical operational decisions VOSA has to make as lessons are learned with each refurbishment. Following the publication of the SLA, our policy on Defects Rectification was reviewed and relaunched across the testing network. VOSA wanted to emphasise this 'operator friendly' policy enabling minor repairs or adjustments to be made in the test lane, minimising delay and downtime for the presenter.

The SLA process has now gained its own momentum. December 2005 saw the third meeting between the trade and VOSA to look at progress so far and how the SLA could be developed further. The trade have been able to make clear what they want, a firm vote in favour of Account Managers which they would like to see extended and a greater understanding of the defects that can be amended after test at the station. SLA2 looks to more commitment and action from the trade to improve test pass rates. This will include more communication and education with presenters who prepare and take operators' vehicles to test and a role for the trade representative bodies in fielding and monitoring concerns by their members that they feel unable directly to report to VOSA for fear of victimisation.

The development of SLA2 demonstrates that this is a genuinely dynamic document that can be used to improve understanding and focus on shared concerns from all parties concerned. Moreover it is a way of working together to achieve our joint goals of improved road safety and fair competition.

Post Collision Vehicle Examinations

VOSA Examiners form part of the road traffic collision investigation process by providing the Police with factual evidence on previous mechanical condition and the effects that defects may have had on performance and behaviour for vehicles involved in accidents. The majority of these examinations are carried out on Heavy Goods and Passenger Carrying Vehicles involved in Killed or Serious Injury (KSI) road traffic collisions. However, VOSA also undertake private car and motorcycle examinations for a small number of Police Forces.

Technical information obtained during these examinations is used in a variety of ways to explore preventative measures and, where necessary, progress safety matters with vehicle manufacturers.

This work contributes directly to the Government's road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets. As part of VOSA's ongoing commitment to this key role in collision investigations, significant work has been undertaken over the last three years to enhance the quality of service provided to the Police, Department of Transport (DfT) and other stakeholders.

VOSA have introduced a specialist training programme specifically designed to cater for Examiners who are involved in the examination of vehicles after a collision. This programme centres on post-collision examination techniques, technology and the preservation and presentation of evidence. Eighty-six VOSA Examiners have successfully completed this extensive programme allowing them to work to the high standards required in the Road Death Investigation Manual produced by the Police and demands placed upon them by the Legal System.

Requests have been received from Police Forces and other Government Departments outside Great Britain to train members of their staff on post-collision vehicle examinations. VOSA regard this as a positive reflection on the quality of the training programme.

Collision research data requirements have been redefined in consultation with stakeholders including DfT, Police and Transport Research Laboratory. This has resulted in an increased amount of technical data being captured during collision examinations whilst ensuring that this is communicated in a standard format which is fully compliant with customer requirements.

High visibility vehicle examination units with the equipment and facilities to give VOSA staff support with in-depth examinations of vehicles, gathering and retention of evidence have been specified and supplied to enforcement areas. These vehicles can either be deployed at the scene of a collision or during subsequent examinations. VOSA currently has 21 vehicles in its national post-collision examination fleet. These vehicles are strategically located throughout the country in line with the demand for this work.

As a result of the changes implemented, VOSA are now delivering an enhanced level of service to customers. VOSA is now seen as the first choice provider of this service by the majority of Police Forces throughout Great Britain. Since the beginning of the development process, the number of Forces utilising the agency service has increased from 30 to 48 (out of 51 Police Forces) and, in 2004/2005, VOSA carried out just short of 2,600 vehicle examinations for the Police. The Police have become more reliant on the service that VOSA provide and recognise the agency's expertise in this field and its valuable contribution to the collision investigation process. Indeed, some Prosecutors (Procurator Fiscal Service & Crown Prosecution Service) are now insisting on a VOSA vehicle examination and subsequent presentation of technical evidence in KSI cases. A number of reports have been received from Police Forces complimenting the way VOSA staff now carry out this work, thoroughness of their vehicle examinations, evidence gathered and the way in which it is presented. On many occasions, the evidence of VOSA Examiners has played a key part in successful prosecution cases. The number of requests from Police Forces asking VOSA to undertake more of this work has also risen over recent years in line with the service enhancements.

All evidence suggests that VOSA's reputation in collision examinations has been significantly enhanced by the development work undertaken. VOSA staff are better equipped to deal with this challenging role, the agency has gained a higher profile in this work and is delivering a better value for money service to the customer. VOSA were recently requested to assist in an investigation in the Isle of Man, which is perhaps a testament to the agency's enhanced reputation. This would not have occurred prior to the implementation of this training and development of the collision examination scheme.

The changes implemented to the post-collision vehicle examination service provide a robust platform on which to further the agency's role in road traffic collision activities. Work is continuing to ensure that VOSA delivers a modern, value-for-money service which continues to evolve in line with customer requirements.

Automotive Design or Construction Safety Defects.

From time to time in the vehicle world things go wrong with the product.

For the past 27 years in the UK, design or construction product safety issues have been addressed by Codes of Practice which are voluntary agreements between the Department for Transport (DfT), represented by the Vehicle Safety Branch (VSB) of VOSA, and the Trade Associations representing the motor manufacturing industry.

As VSB has dealt with almost all in the global automotive sector over so many years the Codes are recognised globally as an effective process for a manufacturer and government agency to follow and which allow for open discussion and close cooperation to identify and address safety issues quickly and effectively as and when they arise.

The Codes, which cover everything from a bicycle to the largest goods vehicle, have been responsible for the recall in the UK of over 38 million vehicles, numerous production changes, technical bulletins to dealers and changes in servicing regimes.

They have contributed to a high level of vehicle safety and reliability by providing evidence to influence changes in design or construction.

In 2004, Directive 2001/95/EC on general product safety came into force which applied to a wide range of consumer products including vehicles.

The Directive required producers and distributors to place only safe products on the market, to take an appropriate action when products are identified as being unsafe and for Member States to establish enforcement authorities in charge of monitoring product safety and with powers to impose effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties.

On 1 October 2005, the Directive was transposed into UK law and the *General Product Safety Regulations 2005* came into force.

VOSA was successful in being recognised in the regulation guidance as the sole enforcement authority in the UK with sectoral responsibility in the automotive sector for product safety issues.

In respect of vehicles, no other EU Member State, with the exception of Germany, had anything in place similar to that which exists in the UK.

Consequently, VOSA saw an opportunity to lead and promote the UK process within Europe.

On 2 February 2006, the EC Technical Adaptation Committee is to consider a paper from VOSA suggesting adoption of a harmonised approach to automotive safety issues throughout Europe based on the UK model.

This has the support of the motor manufacturing industry and the UK Trade Associations who together with VOSA have aspirations that this will lead to the development of a European Code of Practice.

Targeted enforcement – Power to Stop

VOSA staff now have the legal authority under the *Police Reform Act of 2002* to stop private vehicles and commercial motorists at the roadside. The power to stop (PtS) programme, has now almost completed its roll-out throughout England and Wales with VOSA stoppers receiving accreditation from all but one police force. Dyfed Powys are the only force yet to complete accreditation procedures.

DfT have recently submitted to ministers a proposal to include PtS in a Home Office Bill planned for autumn 2006 which, if successful, will see powers to stop in Scotland by mid 2007.

The PtS programme is proving very effective. The most recent comparison of enforcement in VOSA areas with PtS, compared with their performance a year earlier utilising police support, indicates that roadworthiness checks have increased by 35% and roadworthiness prohibitions by 37.3%. Traffic checks and prohibitions are up by 16.4% and 53.7% respectively. Overall, 2600 additional prohibitions – to remove defective or overloaded vehicles or tired drivers from the road – were issued during the year. Deterrence has also increased significantly, with vehicles a third more likely to be stopped for a check than hitherto.

ANPR/WIMS Trial

During the period April–September 2005, VOSA was involved in a trial to investigate the viability and usefulness of linking Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and Weigh-in-Motion Sensors (WIMS) technology for enforcement purposes in the West Midlands. This trial was the first of its kind within the UK and involved the Highways Agency (HA), VOSA, Central Motorway Police Group (CMPG) and the Department for Transport (DfT).

The trial was designed to ascertain the equipment's usefulness in order to allow easier identification of overloading offenders. Through this VOSA hoped to achieve more effective use of resources, and at the same time, reduce the burden on compliant operators by focusing mainly on potential offenders. The Highways Agency would also benefit by reduced abnormal carriageway erosion and incident related congestion.

One of the main trial objectives was to focus on the equipment's accuracy, both in its ability to correctly identify vehicles' registered numbers, and its ability to weigh those vehicles within acceptable enforcement tolerances. When vehicle test results were analysed and compared with dynamic axle weighbridge readings, extremely high accuracy levels were found, unsurpassed by any other Weigh-in-Motion equipment used by VOSA. This was borne out by the following statistics:

- 271 commercial vehicles identified as overloaded
- 204 commercial vehicles attracted Overload Prohibitions
- 100% accuracy rate for predictive targeting
- 52 Driver's Hours Prohibitions issued
- 44 Mechanical Prohibitions issued
- 3 impounded vehicles

These figures provide conclusive proof that this ANPR/WIMS installation provides VOSA with enough targeting capability to ensure that a significant percentage of vehicles selected for weighing are actually overloaded. The accuracy level can be perceived as even greater when you consider that most of the vehicles which didn't receive prohibitions were still overloaded, albeit they came within accepted tolerance levels. In addition to this, 52 drivers were prohibited for instances of serious driver's hours breaches, and 44 prohibitions were issued for various mechanical defects.

Early analysis of the ANPR/WIMS equipment trial results undoubtedly show that the combined technology provides VOSA with a major targeting tool for vehicle weight enforcement. There is a vast difference between the trial weighing effectiveness levels and those from the most recent period of pre-ANPR/WIMS implementation. These results prove conclusively that combined ANPR and WIMS installations provide an essential tool for highly focused enforcement targeting.

Targeted operations achievements

VOSA take part in running a number of targeted operations across the country to reduce vehicles and drivers on the road who are not complying with the regulations. Action is also taken against operators who breach drivers' hours and who fail to maintain their vehicles properly. Two examples of these follow:

Operation Cluedo

A major operation to tackle illegal waste carriers, which involved more than 100 members of enforcement agencies and four check sites in North West London, resulted in 124 offences being found during checks on 167 vehicles.

The operation led by VOSA, included the Metropolitan Traffic Police, Thames Valley Police Force, the Environment Agency, HM Revenue and Customs, and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The checks were intelligence-led, using the Police's Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras and the agencies' databases. The Police teams selected and stopped the target vehicles; VOSA staff checked the mechanical condition, weight and compliance with driver and Operator licences, driver's hours and the Working Time Directive; HM Revenue and Customs staff checked for improper use of red diesel and the Department for Work and Pensions verified if drivers were lawfully employed.

Drivers' hours infringements

A PSV operator based in Luton authorised for 10 vehicles was investigated for alleged drivers' hours infringements as the result of a complaint from a disgruntled former employee. The examiners who mounted the investigation were met by a wall of resistance, total lack of cooperation and 'no comment' interviews. Despite a very difficult case to prove, the examiners managed to mount a successful prosecution against the company and five of its drivers amounting to over 68 offences (48 against the operator and 20 against the drivers) including false records. On 07/12/05, the company were fined £15 000 with £10 000 costs and the drivers were fined a total of £1 700 – a grand total of £26 700.00. These fines were substantially more than the average fines reflecting the severity of this case.

