

News

Civil Service Head Opens Centre at Sunningdale Park

Page 1

Design Review

Page 2

Improved Finance System for Central Government

Page 2

OGC's Progress towards an SR04 Strategy

Page 2

New S-Cat for Professional Services

Page 2

Trials for Open Source Systems Begin

Page 3

Home Office Adelphi Programme

Page 3

In-Depth

Design Quality Indicator Goes Online

Page 4 Page 8

Beating the Hackers

Page 4 Page 10

Environment Agency Gets Green Lights

Page 4 Page 12

Area Procurement in the Prison Service

Page 4 Page 14

Latest Developments in e-PIMS

Page 4 Page 15

People & Events

Report: Excellence in the Community

Page 4 Page 17

Report: e-Commerce Awards 2003

Page 4 Page 18

Publications

Page 5

Future Events

Page 5

PM's Better Public Building Award

Page 5

CABE Client Workshop

Page 6

Bigger, Better, Be There!

Page 6

News

Civil Service Head Opens Centre at Sunningdale Park

Sunningdale Park, home to the Centre for Management and Policy Studies' (CMPS) residential training, played host to the country's most senior civil servant on Friday 3 October when Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Andrew Turnbull, formally opened the new Evelyn Sharp Learning and Resource Centre. The building has been named after Dame Evelyn Sharp who was the first woman Permanent Secretary and who served in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government from 1955 to 1966.

The new building, which houses 9 lecture theatres, a conference suite and a library, is just the latest in a series of developments to result from a Public Private Partnership contract signed by the Cabinet Office (of which CMPS is a part) and Initial Style Conferences Ltd, and bringing capital investment worth £12 million. CMPS is the Government's own learning and development organisation. It provides its services to the Civil Service and the wider public sector, as well as working with many overseas administrations.

Businesses throughout Berkshire will also now be able to take advantage of this modern facility. James Hogg, Initial Style's general manager at Sunningdale Park, said: "There are great opportunities here for business to benefit from these superb facilities by using them for their own training and conference needs."

Other improvements to date include a refurbished restaurant building, upgraded bedrooms and refurbished office accommodation for staff. Future upgrading will include further bedroom improvements and refurbishment for the Grade II-listed Northcote House.

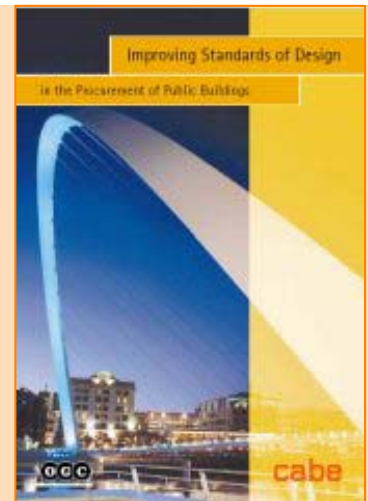


Sir Andrew Turnbull and Henry Chandler, Regional Managing Director of Rentokil Initial (of which Initial Style Conferences is a part)

Design Review

Last year the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and OGC jointly published the report *Improving Standards of Design in the Procurement of Public Buildings*. The aim of the report was to consider what steps might be necessary to ensure further improvement in the design quality of buildings and infrastructure projects procured by the public sector.

At the request of Ministerial Design Champions, OGC and CABE are now undertaking a small-scale review to give a better understanding of how government departments, their agencies and NDPBs have reacted to the report's recommendations. The aim is to capture the good practices that are already occurring across the public sector and these issues will be discussed with departmental colleagues over the coming months. The review provides an opportunity to feed back to CABE <http://www.cabe.org.uk/> and OGC, views on the support offered and how this could be improved.



For more information please contact Bridget Hardy, Workspace Guidance Team Leader, Property and Construction Best Practice Development Centre on 020 7271 2708.

Improved Finance System for Central Government

OGC, OGCbuying.solutions and HM Treasury, supported by a number of other government departments and the National Audit Office (NAO), have embarked upon a project to improve the way in which civil central government specify and then procure financial systems. The Core Accounting System Specification (CASS) project is the delivery mechanism for one of OGC's key targets for 2003/04, namely:

“By 31 March 2004, to have agreed a specification for the core elements of a finance system for central civil government departments and their associated bodies, and to have agreement from major suppliers of such systems to incorporate these requirements into their standard products.”

The project aims to leverage significant savings by producing a statement of requirement that meets the majority of the accounting functionality required from an accounting system and making these available to departments and their bodies, thus negating the reinvention of the wheel that takes place at the moment.

Both the Heads of Accountancy Profession Group and the Treasury's Systems Accountants Group recognise the project as potentially delivering something of real benefit that they will actually be able to use and are therefore fully supportive of this central initiative. It is hoped that further modules will follow to provide a full range of functionality that departments may call upon.

Further information is available from Dave King on 020 7271 2951 dave.king@ogcbs.gsi.gov.uk

OGC's Progress towards an SR04 Strategy

The Office of Government Commerce is adopting a consultative approach to planning its strategic direction for the Spending Review 2004 period (2006-07 and 2007-08). This work began at one of OGC Directors' regular bi-annual workshops in June and, after discussion by OGC Board in early July, was the subject of a special seminar with Directors and others from all parts of OGC.

Next, the issues identified internally were debated by delegates to last month's Joint Planning Conference, the important annual gathering of departmental customers of OGC, which helps to shape forward planning. These issues included OGC's vision, positioning, remit and PSA target, with many useful viewpoints being noted. OGC's seven key priorities – agreed by its Supervisory Board for the SR02 period – are to be retained for the SR04 period.

The consultation process has continued through CEAG (the Chief Executive's Advisory Group) at the end of September and next goes before the OGC Supervisory Board at its meeting on 21 October for consideration and commitment to the overall SR04 strategy.

Work can then begin on drafting a robust SR04 submission to the Treasury next Spring.

New S-Cat for Professional Services

The Professional Services categories of S-Cat (HR; Financial Services; Business and Management Consultancy) have recently been established in response to recommendations made by the [National Audit Office](#) in its report *Purchasing of Professional Services Across Government*, published in April 2001, which was endorsed by the Public Accounts Committee.



Each of the categories (listed below) is a series of Framework Agreements that have been established by OGCbuying.solutions. These provide the public sector with a simplified means of procuring external services from a variety of service providers.

[HR Services](#) – Consultancy, Interim Management, Recruitment, Training and Body Shop

[Financial Services](#) – Accountancy, Audit, Consultancy, Training and PPP/PFI Advice

[Business and Management Consultancy](#)

These agreements form part of S-Cat and may be used by all UK organisations that are subject to EC Services or Utilities Directives. If your organisation is not already registered for [S-Cat](#) details can be found at <http://www.ogcbs.gov.uk/>.

Further information is available from helen.george@ogcbs.gsi.gov.uk

Trials for Open Source Systems Begin

A series of Open Source Software (OSS) trials are taking place across central government departments and the wider public sector. Nine 'proof of concept' trials, co-ordinated by OGC and the Office of the e-Envoy (OeE), build upon the joint OGC/OeE strategy on the use of OSS as an alternative to proprietary software. Run by IBM, the initial trials, which measure effectiveness and cost benefits, may lead to further pilot studies with selected suppliers to validate the emerging findings.

Taking part in the trials are: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Powys County Council; Orkney Council; OFWAT; Department for Work and Pensions; Office of the e-Envoy; Newham Borough Council; and Central Scottish Police Authority.

The Office of the e-Envoy published the Government's policy on the use of Open Source Software in July 2002. The OSS trials fit that policy, which encourages proper consideration of OSS with other proprietary brands. The policy is available at <http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/>.

At the same time, OGC announced its latest deal on pricing arrangements for software with IBM. This will offer enhanced discounts across the public sector with additional savings where Linux products are specified.

Contact: Martin Day on 020 7211 1318 or email: martin.day@ogc.gsi.gov.uk.

IBM press enquiries to Juliet Weatherley at IBM UK on 01753 780819 / 07967 275817 or juliet@uk.ibm.com.

Home Office Adelphi Programme

As part of its Modernisation of Government programme, the Home Office is introducing a fully integrated ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system.

Known as the Adelphi programme, it is based on Oracle software and will encompass the finance, procurement and HR functions across the whole of the department although it will not cover the executive agencies such as HM Prison Service. The aim is to provide better tools and resources to support front-line delivery through, for example, improved management reporting.

The system is presently being built with a model office trial planned for the new year. If the trials go to plan, Adelphi will go live in April 2004 and will be rolled out across the department over the rest of the year.

The project has been fully supported throughout by a cross-functional project team drawn from across the department and PFI partners. The Gateway process has been followed, with Gateway 3 having been completed.

We will bring you more about the Adelphi programme in a future issue but in the meantime, you can contact the team through: Ann Pilkington (ann.pilkington@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

Design Quality Indicator Goes Online

An online version of the Design Quality Indicator (DQI) has been launched. DQI is a pioneering tool which evaluates the design quality of buildings and, uniquely, assesses the design quality of both external and internal features of a building. Developed by the Construction Industry Council, the Indicator is seen as a strong link between design and value for money. The new web-based version is user-friendly and easy to initiate. [Page 8](#)



Beating the Hackers

Britain is backing a major international initiative designed to help beat Internet hackers. The UK Government's National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre (NISCC) is supporting key research which, each year, identifies the top 20 internet security weaknesses that are most often exploited and the counter-measures needed to overcome these vulnerabilities. [Page 10](#)



Environment Agency Gets Green Lights

The Environment Agency's switch to renewable power will save more than 17,500 tonnes in carbon dioxide emissions a year – the equivalent of what is emitted by around 2,100 homes each year. Buying green electricity also means that the Agency is largely exempt from paying the Climate Change Levy, which is imposed on businesses who obtain their energy from fossil fuel sources. [Page 12](#)

Area Procurement in the Prison Service

A recent NAO report into modernising procurement in the Prison Service and a drive to meet savings targets have given momentum to the implementation of the Prison Service's procurement strategy. [Page 14](#)



Latest Developments in e-PIMS

The Electronic Property Information Mapping System (e-PIMS) holds information about all properties on the civil estate in an electronic database. Chris Statham, OGC, sets out the background to the system and the benefits for departments. [Page 15](#)



From left to right:
Steve Rooney, Chris Statham, Geoff Parkin

People & Events

Excellence in the Community

The Centres of Excellence Community Event was held on the 2 October 2003, and initial feedback has hailed the event as another success. Over 200 delegates representing 73 government organisations and 6 private sector organisations attended the event. [Page 17](#)

e-Commerce Awards 2003

At the Awards ceremony, held at The Grosvenor House Hotel in London on 8 October, Response Maintenance and Building Services Ltd won £40,000 for its innovative use of internet, information and communication technologies, beating an incredible 2,944 SMEs from across the UK to the title. The InterForum e-Commerce Awards are backed by the DTI's UK online for business. [Page 18](#)



Peter Gershon delivered the
keynote address

Publications

Replacing the State?

ACEVO, the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, is calling for a PFI equivalent to enable the voluntary sector to run more public services. Stephen Bubb, Chief Executive of ACEVO, believes that *"too often the debate over who should run public services in the future is presented as a straight race between the public and private sectors. In fact there is a third contestant, the voluntary sector"*.

Launching a new book, *Replacing the State?*, on 25 September, Stephen Bubb said the public was being deceived about the real choices for public service delivery and that taxpayers will benefit from improved public services if the Government does more to enable the voluntary sector to compete.

Mr Bubb said: *"The voluntary sector already runs vital public services successfully in healthcare, education, personal social services, housing and many other fields. These services need stable, long-term funding as a matter of urgency. We are no longer marginal to the debate on public service reform, but part of the answer."*

"Charities in this country have an asset base of £70 billion and they have a turnover of nearly £20 billion a year. We employ one-and-a-half million professional staff."

He went to give examples of successful voluntary sector projects – a not-for-profit hospital group, the air ambulance service and, in one particular case, the RNID negotiated the price of digital hearing aids down from several thousand pounds each to just £60, transforming the NHS audiology units in the process.

Mr Bubb continued: :

"However, the voluntary sector currently spends too much time and money renegotiating short-term contracts with the state. A PFI equivalent needs to be found for the voluntary sector to run services so that it can compete on the same terms as the private sector. We want long-term, 25-year, contracts - not short-term year-on-year renegotiating."

For further information contact:

ACEVO: 0845 310 9468

Copies of *Replacing the State?* are available through the website www.acevo.org.uk and from the publications desk on 0845 345 8481.



Future Events

Date	Event	Location
Oct 22	PM's Better Public Buildings Award (see below) www.betterpublicbuildings.gov.uk	
Nov 5	Society of Purchasing Officers – Annual Conference http://www.bipcontracts.com/events/sopoconf_03/	Novotel London Euston
Nov 6	Departmental Gateway Co-ordinator Event essie.omoma@ogc.gsi.gov.uk	
Nov 13	DTI Supplier Adoption Strategy Event eProcurement@ogc.gsi.gov.uk	DTI Conference Centre, London
Nov 16-18	CBI Business Showcase www.cbi.org.uk	ICC Birmingham
Nov 25	CABE Client Workshop (see below) cabe@whiteroseconferences.co.uk	BALTIC, Gateshead
Dec 2 - 3	GPS Annual Conference (see below) Tony.Rodgers@ogc.gsi.gov.uk	The Hilton Metropole, Birmingham

Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award

In the July edition of *GC forum*, we ran an article about Lord Falconer's announcement of the shortlist for the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award 2003.

The Award is due to be made at the annual British Construction Industry Awards presentation evening on 22 October.

Look out for a report of the event in next month's edition of *GC forum*.

Further details can be obtained at www.betterpublicbuildings.gov.uk.

Creating Excellent Buildings - Your invitation to a CABE Client Workshop.

A series of six, free one-day events are being run by CABE (the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment), to disseminate the practical advice provided in *Creating Excellent Buildings: A Guide for Clients*.

The events will provide:

- Advice about your role as a client for a building project
- Lessons from CABE about how to get an excellent building
- Practical experiences from other clients and project case studies
- Information about the stages of a building project through to opening
- An understanding of procurement
- Free copies of the Guide

Each workshop will include plenary presentations and practical workshops on key topics, including writing a brief, undertaking feasibility work, choosing an architect, understanding procurement, managing builders etc. Speakers will include leading clients, architects and consultants.

The events are open to all clients from the public or private sector, and are ideally suited to those who haven't had a lot of previous experience in building projects, or would like a refresher.

Event details:

Gateshead 25 November 2003 (BALTIC, Centre for Contemporary Arts)
Oxford 9 December 2003 (Templeton College)
Salford 13 January 2004 (The Lowry Centre)
Rotherham 22 January 2004 (Magna)
Taunton 12 February 2004 (Taunton Racecourse)
London 10 March 2004 (TUC Congress Centre)

For full details and to reserve a place, contact: White Rose Conferences & Services Phone: 01709 828181 Fax: 01709 828732 or email cabe@whiteroseconferences.co.uk

To request your copy of the guide, phone 020 7960 2400 or download a PDF version at www.cabe.org.uk/publications

Bigger, Better, Be There!

The biggest event in the procurement calendar is fast approaching. This year's GPS Conference is set to deliver an outstanding agenda and provide an excellent networking opportunity for qualified, cross-government, procurement professionals.



The GPS Annual Conference
The Hilton Metropole, Birmingham
(www.birminghammet.hilton.com)
2/3 December 2003

Much is happening in the procurement world and the challenges for GPS members are mounting. This year's event aims to give a wider perspective of these various developments including:

- How the new PPM specialism (www.ppm.ogc.gov.uk) and Centres of Excellence - both high on the Government's delivery agenda - impact on procurement
- Actions following the Byatt Report into local government procurement
- e-Auctions
- The Better Regulation Task Force report into barriers facing SMEs
- The demise of PFI for IT projects
- Using procurement to encourage innovation
- How the GPS fits within the context of Successful Delivery Skills.

Delegates will have a real opportunity to help shape how the procurement function interacts with these new initiatives. The

guest speaker, Alice Perkins, from the Cabinet Office's Corporate Development Group, will provide a strategic view of how these disciplines/initiatives will co-exist and Ken James, Chief Executive of CIPS, will chair the proceedings.

You might ask "*where are the usual updates on EU Policy, and so on?*" and so we plan to have a special conference edition of *GC Forum*, which, as well as covering the proceedings, will provide updates on other topics of interest.

We want the conference to be as interactive as possible and for members to help shape the future of GPS in readiness to face the many challenges that lie ahead.

So don't miss the biggest event of the year!

If you have not received your invitation, contact: Tony Rodgers on 0207 271 1390 or tony.rodgers@ogc.gsi.gov.uk
For a full agenda, go to www.gps.ogc.gov.uk

If you have any comments or would like to contribute to *GC forum*, please contact the editor on: phone 01689 838104 or christine.barnicoat@btinternet.com

The Editorial Board Members are:

Bryan Avery, Chair (OGC), Nic Hopkins (OGC), John Kitching (British Library), Sandy Flatman (The National Archives), Jason Skill (Department for Education and Skills), Sue Broyd (OGC), Suzanne Fred (OGC), Philip Cunliffe, Deputy Editor and Christine Barnicoat, Editor.

Design Quality Indicator Goes Online



“OGC has supported the work on design quality indicators from the very beginning, because central government is committed to creating better public buildings and design quality has an important part to play in that.” (Peter Gershon, October 2003)



The Design Quality Indicator (DQI) tool is the pioneering process to evaluate the design quality of buildings. Unlike other performance measurement tools that drive reform and improvement by focussing on the construction process, uniquely, DQI measures the quality of design in the products, ie, in the buildings themselves. This ability to measure and analyse quality is crucial to understanding what makes a building good and being able to use that knowledge to make them better.

OGC has been a strong supporter of the Construction Industry Council’s initiative from the outset, seeing a very strong link between design and value for money. DQI also fits neatly with three other successful OGC initiatives, the Achieving Excellence in Construction initiative, the Gateway Process and Programme and Project Management Centres of Excellence.

DQI is based on a non-technical questionnaire that can capture a wide range of stakeholder opinions from all those involved in the production and use of buildings. The DQI questionnaire encompasses questions about the three elements of design quality – Build Quality, Functionality and Impact - that are relevant at any stage in the development of a building, and the tool should be used repeatedly throughout the life of the project. Through this facilitated self-assessment process, DQI captures the hard-to-quantify concepts of design quality and uses a common framework and language that allows stakeholders to compare and analyse the attributes of quality. It gives project teams a “tool for thinking” about design, and this is probably its most important contribution in the drive to raise standards.

An important measure of a building’s design quality is whether it satisfies user requirements. Users are the people who are most greatly affected by the building, and who, when effectively involved, can contribute greatly to design innovation and improvement. But, they often have difficulty in expressing their ideas about design to other stakeholders and designers. By using simple, non-technical language and visual outputs that reveal quickly where commonalities and differences arise, the DQI tool bridges the divides between diverse stakeholders and enables them to discuss and acknowledge their differing perspectives. By involving all stakeholders, the tool enables project teams to develop and build designs that are better at meeting users needs through the whole life of the building.



The DQI tool should be used at every key stage of the development:

The Brief: this version allows the project aspirations to be clearly set, addressing the opinions of the stakeholders, and can be used through strategic briefing stages to detailed brief, to set priorities and answer questions such as: What do we want? Where do we want to spend the money?

Mid-Design: this allows the project team to check whether early aspirations have been met, and allows adjustments in focus and quality to be made accordingly. The DQI can be used as many times as required while the design can still respond.

Ready for Occupation: this is used immediately before occupation to check whether the brief/original intent has been achieved.

In-use: This version is used to receive feedback from the project team and the building users, to check whether aspirations have been realised and to lead on to more thorough post occupancy evaluation. Lessons learned can be taken forward to other projects.

DQI Online is the web-based version of the tool. It is straightforward to initiate and use and the results are obtained instantly. DQI Online is at www.dqi.org.uk and details of how to access the tool are available at this site. OGC recommends the use of a facilitator, especially at the early stages of a project where trained professionals can help develop the ideas of the stakeholders into workable briefs. Information about facilitators, or how to become one are available on the DQI Online website.

The full transcript Peter Gershon's keynote speech at the launch is available from the [OGC](http://www.ogc.gov.uk) website.

Further information is also available at <http://www.cic.org.uk/>

Beating the Hackers

Britain is backing a major international initiative designed to help beat Internet hackers.

The UK Government's National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre (NISCC) is supporting key research which, each year, identifies the top 20 internet security weaknesses that are most often exploited and the counter-measures needed to overcome these vulnerabilities. For example, work so far has resulted in the development of new and expanded sections on Internet Explorer and Outlook / Outlook Express. The top 20 list reflects the experience of the sponsoring organisations and more than thirty other security-conscious corporations and universities around the world.

Speaking in Washington on 9 October, NISCC Director, Stephen Cummings said:

"Internet vulnerabilities, or weaknesses are a global problem. They affect all of us – from corporate giants to home users. It is therefore vital that we continue to tackle this problem. As a result of the work, a number of scanning tools are available for system and network administrators to use. There is no quick fix for beating vulnerabilities, but listing and highlighting those which are most exploited is a very good start."

The NISCC, an interdepartmental organisation, was set up in 1999 to co-ordinate and develop existing work within government and the private sector to defend the Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) against electronic attack. NISCC works in partnership with CNI providers to help protect them from electronic attack.

Chaired by the [Home Office](#), with members drawn from the [Cabinet Office](#), the [Communications-Electronics Security Group \(CESG\)](#) of [GCHQ](#), the [Security Service](#), the [Ministry of Defence](#) and the Police, NISCC is responsible for co-ordinating identification of the most critical systems and their protection in cases of attack.

The [UK Government CERT \(Computer Emergency Response Team\)](#) is run by NISCC and draws on technical support from CESG, the UK national technical security authority. Its original customers were government departments and agencies. Recently this has been expanded to include companies holding sensitive government contracts, and most recently CNI organisations. NISCC has also formed the Electronic Attack Response Group (EARG) to respond to serious electronic attack incidents.

NISCC issues a range of briefing products and gives access to specialist expertise to CNI partners. In some cases, NISCC's sponsoring departments will be able to offer direct assistance, in other cases the expertise will be more readily available through linked and approved organisations. In the wider private sector, [DTI](#) is working to raise awareness of the importance of good information security and in particular is promoting the benefits of BS7799 (the standard for information security management).

For further information contact Dan McNorton in the Home Office press office on 020 7273 4545 or visit www.niscc.gov.uk

Environment Agency Gets Green Lights

Every watt of electricity used by the Environment Agency at its 2,000 plus sites comes from renewable sources such as wind, it was announced on 2 October. Over the last three years, the Environment Agency has gradually switched each of its offices, sites, pumping and gauging stations, including the Thames Barrier and its Head Office in Bristol, over to 'green electricity'.

It is estimated that the Agency's switch to renewable power will save more than 17,500 tonnes in carbon dioxide emissions a year – the equivalent of what is emitted by around 2,100 homes each year. Buying green electricity also means that the Environment Agency is largely exempt from paying the Climate Change Levy, which is imposed on businesses which obtain their energy from fossil fuel sources.



The 'green electricity' is purchased only from accredited suppliers who provide the Agency with certification to prove this. The supplier directly contracts with a generator of green electricity and while it is impossible for suppliers to guarantee that the electricity the Agency actually receives is green, they will ensure that every unit used is balanced by one supplied by a green generator.

The Environment Agency has also highlighted other environmental achievements of the past year, in its Annual Environmental Report for 2002/2003. The report sets out the progress that the Agency has made this year against its own 12 key environmental performance targets.

Highlights of the year's environmental performance include:

- winning the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) award for excellence in ethical procurement
- playing a central role in driving the sustainable procurement agenda across UK government and the United Nations
- cutting the amount of waste produced by each of its 10,000 full-time employees by 8.3kg on 2001/2002 levels
- reducing the emissions from vehicles used on Agency business by 17 per cent. Typically a car will cause carbon emissions of 2.2 tonnes a year, a household will emit 8 tonnes a year and a typical fossil fuel generator will cause 2 million tonnes.

Sir John Harman, Chairman of the Environment Agency, said:

“As Europe’s biggest environmental regulator, the Environment Agency wants to lead from the front and achieve the highest possible standards in its own environmental management and performance.

“This year, we set ourselves some challenging targets and I am pleased that we are meeting, and in some cases exceeding, our targets in a range of areas. I am particularly pleased that we are now operating completely on ‘green’ electricity. Not only does this help us do our bit to encourage the development of renewable power in the UK, but I hope it also encourages consumers, businesses and government departments to do the same.”



The Climate Change Levy, introduced by the Government under the provisions of the Finance Act 2000, commenced on 1 April 2001. The Levy is charged at the rate of 0.43p/kWh on electricity supplied to non-domestic customers in the United Kingdom. Electricity from qualifying renewable sources is exempt from the Levy.

Copies of the Annual environmental report 2002/03, the Annual review 2002/03 and the Annual report can be downloaded from the Environment Agency’s website www.environment-agency.gov.uk or by calling 0845 9 333 111 or by emailing enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Area Procurement in the Prison Service

A recent National Audit Office report into modernising procurement in the Prison Service and a drive to meet savings targets have given momentum to the implementation of the Prison Service's procurement strategy.



The strategy, which has the full backing of the Prison Service Board, involves two main thrusts: first, to improve the procurement processes and materials management within prison establishments and, second, to remove the burden of formal contracting tasks from individual prisons, which are ill-equipped for the role, and place them with professional contracting staff within the Area HQs. This has become known as the Area Procurement Project.

In addition to improvements in the quality of contracting and compliance with regulations, the project will deliver real financial benefits. There will be an opportunity to have fewer contracts that aggregate requirements across a group of establishments and achieve better value for money. Better control of stocks will mean fewer orders against the contracts and fewer deliveries – a real benefit to prisons where there are security pressures at the main gate when deliveries are made. By increasing professionalism and responsibility for contracting now resting with a more experienced team, there will be opportunities to release non-specialist staff and resources to meet more urgent operational tasks.

Three pilot projects are underway in the West Midlands, Isle of Wight and in the High Security Estate to test processes, establish organisation options and to determine an optimum implementation strategy. Once the results of these trials have been assessed the project will be rolled out across the rest of the estate.

The Area Procurement Project will run in parallel with the Phoenix Project to implement an Oracle-based ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system throughout the Service which will embrace finance, HR and procurement activities. The changes being made in procurement procedures will enable the full potential of the Phoenix system to be exploited when the procurement software modules are implemented in 2005.

For further information contact:

Geoff Sykes, Head of CPU (London) on 020 7217 5202 or <mailto:geoff.sykes@hmps.gsi.gov.uk>

Bill Mates, Project Manager, on 01536 274557

Latest Developments in e-PIMS

The Electronic Property Information Mapping System (e-PIMS) holds information about all properties on the civil estate in an electronic database. Chris Statham, OGC, sets out the background to the system and the benefits for departments.

The concept of a common database of all civil estate occupations was outlined in PACE's (pre-OGC) Corporate Plan for the period 1999/2000 – 2002/2003, and originated from the need for a comprehensive record of central government's occupations. The requirement was for a database that included the former departmental estate properties and also took account of those occupations covered by the new managed workspace solutions such as the Department for Work and Pensions' PRIME contract and Inland Revenue Office and Customs and Excise's STEPS project.

There was already a database containing this information (known as PISCES), to which departments had contributed information by traditional means, but this was an internal OGC system, which could not easily be amended to enable online viewing of property information elsewhere in government.

e-PIMS was developed to enable a far more joined-up approach, since not only OGC could access this data but, additionally, other government departmental users could access it via a familiar standard web browser.

Although not mandated, the intention is for e-PIMS to eventually replace the current manual obligations placed on departments under DAO (Gen) 1/96, with a secure user-friendly online facility. Currently OGC updates property occupation data on behalf of the central civil departments who are not signatories of the e-PIMS SLA. From an OGC perspective, this will free-up valuable resources currently used on collecting and inputting data revisions to undertake higher-value strategic tasks more closely aligned to OGC's key remit of modernising procurement in central civil government and delivering substantial value-for-money improvements.

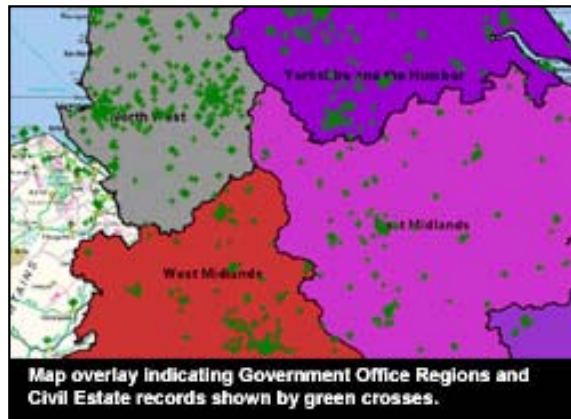


ePIMS Overview

e-PIMS provides an electronic enabling platform from which OGC can help central civil government organisations plan their future accommodation strategy and make best use of existing government workspace. Departments are encouraged to maintain their own property records online or via an XML standard linkage, which provides automated updates from their individual departmental systems.

e-PIMS user organisations are able to use this information to inform and influence their strategic planning processes. This consolidation of civil estate information enhances the prospect of more

clearly focused strategic planning and joined-up solutions, bringing attendant cost savings to the Exchequer.



e-PIMS has improved the quality of the data held by OGC through the elimination of re-keying of data, improvements to the timeliness of information updates and extensions to the OGC property database with departmental occupations not previously recorded on PISCES. e-PIMS also provides a platform enabling OGC and departments to develop collaborative opportunities for more efficient and flexible procurement and use of workspace.

e-PIMS is a full web-based service available over the Government Secure Intranet (GSI) and the Internet via a secure linkage. A high-quality service is maintained by collective ownership between OGC and departments, regulated by a service level agreement, with user training, a helpdesk facility, user representation on the e-PIMS project board and an active user group.



The latest e-PIMS brochure is available at <http://www.ogc.gov.uk> It identifies the purpose and main benefits of e-PIMS to departments along with a number of endorsements from existing departmental users.

For further information contact: <mailto:chris.statham@ogc.gsi.gov.uk>

Excellence in the Community

The Centres of Excellence Community event was held on the 2 October 2003, and initial feedback has hailed the event as another success. Over 200 delegates representing 73 government organisations and 6 private sector organisations attended the event.

Of the delegates that completed the feedback form, 97% thought that the subject material was innovative, 88% thought that the sessions enabled effective networking across government, and overall the event received a 100% satisfaction rating.

The event was hosted by Liz Underhill (Head of Embedding Centres of Excellence), with Peter Gershon providing the keynote address and Tony Betts (Director of Business Change & IT development) launching the improvement planning assessment tool in the plenary session.

The day then had three Breakout Sessions, containing a total of 17 workshops from the Centre, government departments and private sector organisations. To ensure that the delegates made effective use of the breaks, several "Ask the Expert" stands were set up throughout the venue which were used as focal points for areas of interest, and were hosted by:

- Successful Delivery Toolkit - Michael Acaster
- OGC Consultancy – Stephen Mitchell
- Best Practice and OGC Publications – Malcolm Clancy
- Embedding Centres of Excellence – Liz Underhill, Neil Glover, Sam Pittam-Smith, Duncan Sharrocks, Andrew Kearney, Neil Croft, Pat Middleton and Mel Wallwork
- Successful Delivery Skills Programme & PPM Specialism – Peter Johnson, Dennis Dunlop and Karen West
- Achieving Excellence in Construction – Phil Heenan and David Mathieson
- Policy and Procurement – Linda O'Connor and Clelia Uhart.

The next event will take place in London on the 28 January 2004.

Is there something your team, department or directorate have to offer for the next event? Please contact the ECOE team at ECO@ogc.gsi.gov.uk.



e-Commerce Awards 2003

A Wolverhampton-based building contractor, Response Maintenance and Building Services Ltd, has been named the national winner of the e-Commerce Awards 2003.

At the Awards ceremony, held at The Grosvenor House Hotel in London on 8 October, Response Maintenance and Building Services Ltd won £40,000 for its innovative use of internet, information and communication technologies. Its use of mobile and wireless technologies has enabled it to transform itself from a traditional manual labour business, improving job management and supply delivery to its mobile workforce. It also won the Best Use of Mobile and Wireless Technology innovation category at the event, beating an incredible 2,944 other small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) from across the UK (a 75% increase on last year) to the title.

The InterForum e-Commerce Awards are backed by the DTI's UK online for business. They are open to any organisation with less than 250 employees and recognise and reward innovation in the application of internet, information and communication technologies to transform SMEs in the UK.

For further information about this year's Awards and details on how to pre-register or nominate a company for next year see: www.ecommerce-awards.co.uk .

UK online for business (<http://www.ukonlineforbusiness.gov.uk>) is a partnership between government and industry which promotes the use of e-business amongst SMEs. There is a network of advisers situated in the Business Links who provide down-to-earth, practical and impartial advice to individual businesses on how technology can cut time and cost from the way they do business.

For further information contact: Susan Hayes or Victoria Harris at UK online for business publicity centre

Phone: +44 (0)20 7072 4291; email: shayes@gciuk.com or vharris@gciuk.com

InterForum (www.interforum.org) is a not-for-profit organisation that helps British companies to conduct their business electronically. InterForum works to ensure that education, legislation and technology are in place to help British businesses to profit from the digital economy.