

Government ICT Goes Green Conference
Tuesday 15 September, 14:55 – 15:50
QEII Conference Centre, Westminster, London

Thank you, James [Garner]. It is heartening to see so many people here today who believe so passionately in the worth of Greening ICT.

Over the first decade of the twenty-first century, information technology has become the single most important tool in our working lives. In Government we spend hours at the keyboard using computers to help make a real difference to people's lives - be it storing over 400 million digital x-rays, booking 2.7 million driving tests online or, in the case of the Department for Work and Pensions, delivering £121 billion of payments each year.

But for too long we have ignored the demons that stalk behind our terminals. While the hard-drives whir, computers currently pump out enough carbon emissions to rival the aviation industry.

The effects of carbon emissions on the environment have been well publicised and the threats posed by associated global warming are too severe to ignore. If we do nothing, we can look

forward to some devastating consequences; rising sea levels and ozone depletion, catastrophic storms and the spread of disease, and continued pollution of our planet by 'e' waste. But this bleak vision of the future can and must be prevented through a sustained effort to be more Green.

One year ago we took up this substantial challenge. By launching the Greening Government ICT strategy, we not only made a firm commitment to reduce our impact on the environment but also led the way. The UK Government is one of the first in the world to have tackled the environmental problems caused by its IT and our vision now signposts the future for the private sector as well.

If staving off environmental catastrophe wasn't enough to motivate us, then the financial implications of our Green ICT strategy certainly are. With the economy still recovering, we can't afford to pass up any opportunities to improve efficiency. Every time we save energy, we also save taxpayers' money and by pursuing our Green ICT strategy, we will save a lot of both.

A year after the strategy's launch, we have achieved a great deal. The 'Greening Government ICT: One year on' report reveals that carbon emissions are down by over 12,000 tonnes and we have saved at least £6.8 million.

- 12,000 tonnes of CO2
 - = The emissions produced by 23,000 typical homes in a year
 - = Enough carbon for over 23,000 trees for 20 years
- £6.8 million
 - = Ronaldo's reported annual salary at Real Madrid.
 - But seriously,
 - = the construction costs of a new hospital in Cheltenham, which is due to open next year.

One hundred and ten public bodies have produced Green ICT roadmaps that set out 22 specific actions from 18 key areas focused on driving down carbon cost.

Furthermore, we have had a much wider scope of responses than we first anticipated – Central Government, Wider Public Sector, Devolved Administrations and Local Government. This

shows how important this agenda is right across Government and just how seriously people take it.

The action plans show significant progress has been made with 80% of actions delivered, in progress or planned by over 60% of public bodies.

The **Crown Prosecution Service** has decided to replace 9,500 computers and 2,500 printers every 5 years rather than 3. This **delivers £2.35 million in savings** which is being reinvested in other greening government ICT programmes

The **Department for International Development** is in partnership with an organisation that refurbishes computers and distributes them for reuse in education, health and not-for-profit organisations in developing countries - to manage the **redistribution and re-use of obsolete IT equipment**. Once data is securely wiped, equipment is redistributed safe in the knowledge that it will have a second life helping to provide training and new skills in developing countries, fighting poverty and social exclusion. The scheme also takes responsibility for

the disposal of the equipment **in accordance with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment** directive.

HM Revenue and Customs are currently introducing 'Wake On LAN' to over 75,000 PC's – and is expected **to reduce HMRC's CO2 Emissions by 12000 tonnes, and save £2 million per annum** in energy costs. This programme puts PC's into low power mode overnight, at weekends and at other times when they are not in use. HMRC still provide a secure and stable desktop infrastructure by allowing remote activation of machines to deploy security patches and software updates remotely.

As well as Government departments, external IT suppliers have also been targeted by the strategy. A scoring model has been developed which provides a clear metric score to indicate whether a supplier meets the basic requirements for UK tenders and providing products and services to government.

In collaboration with the international community we are ensuring that best practice is shared beyond our shores. The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment sub group has drawn up definitive regulations for Europe and the US, ensuring

that Green principles govern the disposal of any used IT hardware.

- But while we do have much to celebrate, we are not there yet. **Our carbon emissions are still too high; we spend too much money in wasteful IT practices and our processes are not efficient enough. There is much to be done.**

As we improve the way we think about technology enabling a more efficient business, we can provide a better service to the UK citizen.

- Over **4 million** car tax renewals each month are now done on the internet.
- The DirectGov website receives **15 million** visits a month and is now the single place where citizens go to find Government information.
- This year the number of self assessment tax returns filed online has broken all records, with **5.8 million** received by the deadline of midnight on 31 January 2009. This was up more than 50% on last year, with **two thirds of customers**

choosing to use the internet rather than paper forms. In the busiest hour 38,000 returns were filed, just over **10 every second.**

Technology continues to advance and we have positioned ourselves to take best advantage of this, taking a pan-government approach to collaborating with the environment and technology industry.

By changing our working culture we can use IT to reduce carbon emissions still further. Embracing social networking tools and video-conferencing will cut down on building occupancy and travel.

We need to identify common Green ICT standards and clear measurement criteria for the UK and internationally.

If we can sustain this rate of progress then, to hijack a famous advertising slogan, “The future’s bright, the future’s Green.”