



BCS Response to the Cabinet Office's document on "Transformational Government Enabled by Technology"

Introduction

The BCS welcomes the paper issued by the Cabinet Office in 2005 (Ref Cm 6683) entitled "Transformational Government Enabled by Technology".

BCS is the leading professional body for the IT industry. With over 50,000 members, the BCS is the Professional and Learned Society in the field of computers and information systems.

We are responsible for setting standards for the IT profession. It is also leading the change in the public perception and appreciation of the economic and social importance of professionally managed IT projects and programmes. In this capacity, the Society advises, informs and persuades industry and government on successful IT implementation.

The BCS is determined to promote IT as the profession of the 21st century especially as IT is affecting every part of our lives. Therefore, BCS is pleased to take this opportunity to comment on such an important issue.

Therefore, the BCS is pleased to respond to this document and considers that it takes a significant step forward in attempting to illustrate the issues that need to be faced by Government intent upon transforming services. These issues concern all departments if they wish enabling technology to be much better used in delivering Government services and enabling Government policy to be made in a more joined up way.

We have a number of comments to make about the specifics - which are in Annexe A. **Firstly**, BCS have four points that we wish to make which are over-arching to the whole paper; these are as follows.

- 1 The title of the paper "Transformational Government Enabled by Technology" has a number of ramifications. Firstly that technology only *enables* transformation. Other factors to do with the way in which the Government works need to be considered in order that Government services and the Governance of the country is actually transformed. Examples are (1) the behaviour of Civil Servants and of politicians and indeed of citizens, (2) realignment of the processes that are enabled by technology but also those which have nothing to do with technology and are in fact the way in which Government conducts its business. In addition, and specifically, (3) the culture of Government departments being willing to share information between themselves and others needs to be changed for these transformed processes to add value. In particular, the costs associated with these examples need to be included in budgets.

Thus we consider it is important that the paper reflects the balance of priorities and investment that are needed across all these enablers and not just that of IT. Indeed, it is also important that the information element of IT is given as much weight as that of the technology itself. That is to say the content which is being exploited for transforming Government processes is in most ways the most important element of this transformational activity and the technology itself, whether it be mobile phones, network devices, web servers, service orientated architectures, information assurance, are only means to an end of exploiting information to the fullest extent within and between Government departments and between Government and citizens.

Therefore we feel the paper falls short in providing sufficient evidence that attention is going to be paid to the way in which information is managed and valued within Government such that the new governance processes that Government aspires to achieve are in fact transformed and enabled by the programmes that are described in the paper.

- 2 We believe that the *professional* behaviour of all people involved in this process of transforming Government is absolutely critical, not just those involved in IT. BCS is, as the Government is well aware, spearheading a major initiative to transform itself and the professionalism of the ICT sector. Of equal importance is professionalism in Government generally, i.e. that all those other roles within Government that are affected by this initiative are professionalised and adopt professional standards to the same extent with the same quality metrics.

The outcome of these transformational initiatives will, to a large extent, be determined by the professionalism of the individuals concerned throughout all departments and agencies. It will be by these individuals adhering to best practices throughout all of their activities, whether it be in procurement, in interfaces with citizens, with activities to do with design of new processes or to do with education and training of Civil Service and other staff who are involved in the programme and subsequent service delivery, that benefits will accrue. The best professional advice should be sought from a range of sources for all aspects of this programme.

- 3 The transformation of the governance relies not only on Civil Servants behaving differently but also on citizens behaving differently. Again we feel the paper falls short in describing the mechanisms by which Government will achieve an awareness and transformation of the way in which citizens are expected to make choices and behave in order to provide for themselves the best value for money from their interfaces with Government services. Whilst advertising campaigns and marketing campaigns for new services will go some way towards this, the investment in this initiative and the collective behaviour of Government towards it is absolutely critical to a successful outcome.

BCS feel it is important that a programme of activity is put in place to sensitise citizens to the need to make choices in how they wish to interact with government services and how as a result to transform their own behaviour. We



also believe this aspect of the proposed transformation to be very difficult and that the resources needed may have been underestimated. Also it is important to consider that eGovernment adds another channel through which citizens interact with Government – it does not replace other, more traditional channels of communication. There needs to be an element of realism in how many people the electronic services will reach and how much they will be prepared to do that way. Therefore, BCS believes that citizens need to be persuaded about the benefit of eGovernment and to use the e-channels to their own advantage.

In this aspect, BCS can offer a trusted partner in engaging with the BCS membership across the public sector and thus gain strong reinforcement of the eGovernment message through the IT community.

- 4 Lastly the issue of education in Civil Servants and the new range of professional skills needed throughout their career is clearly an important element of this transformation. No timescale is placed on the transformation process but it must be expected that it will take years, if not decades, for the transformational process to be completed. On this regard, it is important to remark BCS' investment and commitment to add value to skills in IT through the development of SFIA (The Skills Framework for the Information Age), a model which enables individuals and organisations to meet industry standard IT skill requirements.

Thus it will be necessary to achieve and maintain the commitment to a continuous process of professional development and education of all staff involved across all departments in order that the skill sets and capability of Government to maintain the quality and outcomes of this transformation are put in place.

Conclusion

Whilst we welcome the initiative in its current form and believe that it does provide a very good basis for going forward, the BCS would welcome the opportunity to have discussions with officials on the points made to further clarify the implications of our comments and to play a proactive part as a partner as appropriate in the successful implementation of this strategy.

Lastly, policy makers, Government and the whole civil service organization need to understand and be fully committed to this new strategy if it is to deliver. Learned Societies and professional bodies should also offer support to help in governance of this process to provide independence and continuity.

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Mike Rodd, Director

The British Computer Society

Annex A

This Annex addresses some detailed points in the paper where there are elements that we believe need to be specifically considered.

1. The vision contains a number of views of what the outcomes may be but in particular in paragraph 6 there is little attention paid other than in financial terms of what the benefits might be to the citizen and to the Government. It is clear that the Government aims to save money but it is not clear what the benefits might be to the citizen in this transformation. This could be better elaborated than is currently the case.
2. We welcome in paragraph 11 the recognition that the scale and complexity of Government business means that its deployment is often pushing the boundaries of what is being achieved elsewhere but that does not mean that Government should throw up its arms and say this is very difficult and try and simplify what it tries to do. It is more that the Government should make mandatory the use the best practice that is available from professionals in the ICT business, should exploit that knowledge and then adhere rigorously to those best practices in all aspects of what it does with as little interference from ill informed sources as possible (cf BCS/RAE study on Complex systems) and make publicly available the result of these process (e.g Gateway reviews, audits etc).
3. The strategy in paragraph 21 contains three themes of activity, only one of which is to do with the transformation enabled by IT. Paragraph 21 (2) and 21 (3) are to do with culture and to do with professionalism respectively and, as has been mentioned elsewhere, these are equally important in terms of investment and attention to process change.
4. We welcome in paragraph 33 the understanding that citizens have to have on line access to their records and that personal datasets and the access to them is something citizens will need to have direct visibility of and in most cases complete control over in order that they feel comfortable that their own personal information is secure and only being exploited to their own benefit and not to the benefit of others. This is considered a critical success factor.

The document also lacks explicit reference to disabled people. The Government Strategy Unit recommends that, by 2005, disabled people should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and be included as equal members of society. Any potential policies and solutions affecting this group should therefore be considered.

5. We welcome the updated application of the protective marking scheme referred to para 39, sub para (4). It is clear that the protective marking scheme does not

necessarily support secure and trustworthy information sharing in the way that the transformed processes will need and that a new scheme to deliver wide availability of assured products and services is an essential part of the investments needed.

6. In the following paragraph identity management is touched on. We believe this to be a huge and critical issue at the core of joined up Government and exploitation of Government information. Whilst making a wider use of the National Insurance Number seems to be a sensible strategy within the context of this paper it is not necessarily compatible with what is written elsewhere in Government policy about the National Identity Card Scheme, and schemes which are being instituted from O.D.P.M. and other schemes that exist or are planned in other Government departments. Furthermore it introduces a single point of vulnerability for identity fraud which as other countries have discovered is undesirable. It would seem that in this particular space which we believe to be critical there is already a crack showing in the joined up nature of thinking about how identity management should be pursued within Government. This does not give us confidence that this transformational process is starting from a good base.
7. Paragraph 42 suggests that leadership and governance are crucial and that the whole system of transformation needs to be maintained for a number of years. This reinforces our view that not only does leadership provide the key to transformation but furthermore that continuous leadership and continued ownership of the conceptual integrity of this transformational process is critical to its success. This point would benefit from more emphasis.
8. The timetable for change in paragraph 53 does not mention education and training. We believe that investment in such a massive programme of change as is alluded to in this paper should also be supported by an educational programme which is made explicit. We do not see sufficient evidence of that educational and training investment in the paper.