

Sent: 06 January 2006 17:22  
To: IT Strategy Project Team  
Subject: Fw: Consultation on CO Paper - Tranformational Govt. « BNFL  
COMMERCIAL »

Dear Sir/Madam

Whilst I have sent the comments below via my employer's email system, the comments reflect my personal opinion and should be respected as such.

The comments have been sent to Gesche as she is collating views for the AGI (Association for Geographic Information). As some of the comments are directly about the strength of this document versus inadequacies to date in Govt strategy I felt I should also send them directly to you.

I praise the direction, principles and wording of your document, but based on the evidence I have surrounding me, Govt IT/IS Strategy is significantly failing to deliver in practice and is likely to actually considerably deteriorate the costbase further. I would welcome the chance to turn this around within our industry and regulators but feel the Govt are either unaware of the issues faced / bottom costbase impact or are not wanting to get their 'hands dirty' to actually solve the situation. I know the situation is even worse in a lot of other Govt areas you mention as I have had many dealings to date with other parties.

If as it says in the foreword, citizens (which includes Govt employees) are to gain 'choice' they need to be very actively involved and steer, they are the experts in their field and are some of the ultimate 'fee paying' customers. In my particular field, better information management and retrieval driving more informed and effective decision making could save the industry 25%. For a £70BN bottom line that is considerable. Everything I have seen to date is likely to increase this figure not work on reducing it. By all means contractorise services but ensure information is managed as a core Govt asset information, protected from organisational change, protected from compromise and appropriately optimised to achieve best value. We are in great danger of the 'baby going out with the bath water' and then paying very dearly to get it back. Despite good intent at Govt level and nice documents like this, it is not fundamentally not happening in practice.

If there is any active role I can play in moving this forward I would welcome the chance to help support you and the vision you wish to implement across Govt activities. This is long overdue especially in this industry and we are in great danger of going further backwards at the taxpayer's expense.

Please could you confirm you have received my comments by return email

Good Luck

Regards

Norman Bird

Subject: Consultation on CO Paper - Transformational Govt. < BNFL  
COMMERCIAL >

Hi Gesche

We have met at previous AGI conferences and I have also sat through some of your presentations. I know you have done some excellent work at Medway and sounds to me like a job well done.

Whilst I come from another area of Govt activities that does not have such a close relationship with the public (the end customer as taxpayer) I still think it is relevant and I understand and have experienced first hand some of the issues the Govt faces in trying to improve services whilst continually reorganising and I feel accountable as a citizen to work with a monetary conscience. My background is 26 years in ~Govt nuclear service initially with UKAEA, then BNFL and now BN Group. The Govt now directly owns all the nuclear site assets that previously belonged to my employers with a likely decommissioning value of ~£70BN i.e. significant. I am MSc qualified in GIS and also an Incorporated Civil Engineer and have dealt with years of disparate data/systems/change including GI that I could write a book about.

In the last five years I feel as an industry we have made some great strides with integrating GI and other information, overcoming structural/organisational interfaces with other govt depts/functions e.g. regulators like NII, OCNS, EA etc., After two and a half years of campaigning we joined the PGA, we are a member of IGGI and have undertook collaborative work with with many Govt departments to improve GI best practice. We have presented to international forums on GIS eg UN / IAEA. We have cut across many internal organisational boundaries to establish our own national GI datasets and are currently working on two initiatives (both national in scale) one encompassing GIS and GPS tracking as a shared compliance initiative with our regulator to simplify and improve the cost and quality of UK regulatory compliance. Another initiative is being rolled out to establish basic Security Awareness e-learning for all 23,000 employees at all sites coming from dedicated centric modules defining industry standards and expectations for consistent compliance for all areas of UK nuclear operations managed by my employer. Hope this gives you some background to my level of knowledge on the subject of GI and IT/IM in general.

I applaude the publication of this document as I feel the content is excellent and it encompasses many of the things that I, as an IS professional, would expect to see and have tried to practice in my workplace to date. My concern here especially for the industry I work in is that if the Govt actually compared this document to current strategy and practice it would recognise that many of the objectives (and consequential taxpayer savings) are not being achieved, and in reality, may be actively being retarded due to inadequately informed and sometimes conflicting decision making by various govt departments. My industry is currently being subjected to re-organisation that is seriously damaging information integrity, increasing vulnerablity, not effectively using resources and is introducing mutiple increased cost factoring to deliver what is for practical purposes the same actual result. It is the equivilent for example of Medway Corporate GIS being told that in future we will operate a disparate series of GI systems which are not integrated, on different platforms by various local parish councils and not achieve

'discount for scale' but merely achieve a Govt directive for competition aimed at reducing costs, but actually, directly and significantly increasing them as a result. Contrary to what is defined in the document about Integration, convergence and Sharing services across traditionally isolated boundaries can reap new benefits and savings, we are moving in completely the opposite direction. As a citizen and a professional it is frustrating that you know where this is going and there is nothing you can do about it. I would like to see this document overcome this gap in thinking for the future.

I would like to see some distinct way within this document to see an 'active debate/ownership' created which includes the end customer (taxpayer/public/expert) involved in achieving a 'balanced best fit' result for services in future. Services/Systems built like this, i.e. bottom up will be the strongest and greatest deliverers of savings in the long term and would essentially be 'people driven' not 'govt specified'. This partnership would and could thrive and would avoid the current issues that the Govt is facing where services are supposed to be becoming more effective to the citizen but the Govt resource/costs to keep all this going is rising steadily despite rearguard actions to sell assets for quick revenue. The sign of good thought out systems is its impact on minimising or reducing resource requirements and steadily improving service quality. I can certainly say from my particular stance that we are way out on this and likely to be introducing significant further cost, reducing quality and increased vulnerability. Our continental cousins seem adept at doing this but UK plc seems to have to re-invent itself rather than improve a visible and auditable track record of systematic improvement.

There is an obvious 'cultural' discontinuity between the public/ground operators like myself and Govt belief in delivery of services. A 'reality check' built into this document with suitable customer resource involvement would go a long way to ensuring we get 'organic growth' of govt activities in future that we can say is the 'best fit' and has given us another inwards step of UK plc integration, optimisation and best management of costs. Without a 'reality check' like this we are faced with yet another Govt document saying all the right things in excellent english but not in reality giving the actual 'fee-paying' customer (the taxpayer) what he wants which is optimum services with minimal waste/duplication/resources at minimal cost.

I would welcome sharing my experiences first hand with anybody from Govt even Tony himself. As a 'taxpaying' ~govt employee with considerable expertise in this area I know the real issues we face and continually seek to overcome this to my mutual benefit as a taxpayer.

If you need further information, my views, support or attendance in any capacity let me know. I would appreciate if my comments are communicated further because somebody in govt needs to understand these basic fundamentals

I wish you well in your exercise for canvassing comments

Good Luck

Norm