

*file
Branch
website*

**FROM: STEPHEN GRIMASON
DIRECTOR, EIS
18 JANUARY 2001**

cc: Mr McKervill
Mrs Armstrong
Mr Fee

TO: DEPARTMENTAL BOARD

e-COMMUNICATIONS in OFMDFM

Issue: The need for a Departmental policy and updated systems for publishing on the world wide web.

Timescale: That work begins as soon as possible to enable the Department to meet its obligations in a timely, coherent and cost-effective way.

Recommendation: That a small working group representative of each Directorate is set up to ensure full integration of all aspects of the Department's business and ownership of the policy across the Department.

As John McKervill of EIS chairs the NICS Internet Editorial Board it proposed that he should chair the Department's working group.

DETAIL

Introduction - e-issues are no longer side issues

1. The Department has recognised that e-issues are central to our work and many of these have been considered in the PriceWaterhouseCoopers review of e-business. Alongside this is the review of NICS on the web, commissioned by CITU(NI) and EIS which will make recommendations on improving public access to information and services via a government web portal.
2. There are a series of issues which together are strong drivers for improving our capability in electronic publishing. These include:
 - the Executive's commitment that all government services will be available electronically by 2005;

- the impact of freedom of information legislation and equality legislation;
 - the increasing number of people visiting government web sites;
 - the big push to make services more accessible for the citizen – easier to understand and more joined up;
 - more people likely to access information and services through digital TV and other new routes.
3. The Department needs to be geared up to cope with the implications of these changes and to take full advantage of them to get our business done. For example, the more information we can publish quickly and accurately via the web, the fewer enquiries we will have to deal with individually, particularly in relation to Freedom of Information.

Current situation

4. The attached end of year report, Annex A, shows how the OFMDFM site has developed and how usage has increased dramatically over the last year.
5. OFMDFM's current presence on the web reflects the structure of the Department. We have some introductory pages and 17 sub-sites dealing with the work of different branches. Hit rates have increased from 12,000 per month in November 2000, to almost 300,000 per month by November 2001. Some of the sites are relatively static while some are regularly updated and are continuing to expand. At present the inputting of information is handled centrally by EIS on behalf of branches.
6. Branches are becoming increasingly aware of the usefulness of the web as a communications tool – not just for publishing information but also as an interactive medium. The Programme for Government and Children's Commissioner consultation exercises are good examples and there is scope to do much more.

Future development

7. As awareness and demand increase, it is arguably desirable that responsibility for the information, particularly routine updating, should sit with each branch. Electronic publishing would therefore become an integral part of every day work. Content management software makes it possible for non-technical staff to input directly to the web with very minimal training. This would free the EIS web team to take forward development work, for example in relation to developing new web pages and interactive services. EIS has provision in its current budget for the introduction of content management and this approach has

been adopted in the PriceWaterhouseCoopers report. We are working with the Head of ISU to identify the most appropriate technical package to meet the Department's needs

8. However for this approach to be successful the Department needs a clear policy on how it should operate and guidance for staff. It is therefore recommended that a small working group representative of each Directorate should be set up to develop an electronic publishing policy for the approval of the Departmental Board.
9. As John McKervill of EIS chairs the NICS Internet Editorial Board it is recommended that he should chair the working group.
10. The main elements a working group could consider in developing a policy would be:
 - Strategic focus – what are the Department's priorities for information publishing
 - Editorial standards – guidance on what should be published and when, how it should be written, how it should be accessed, how it should look
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Workflow
 - Dealing with enquiries.

CONCLUSION

11. The Departmental Board is invited to agree to the establishment of a Departmental Working Group, chaired by the Deputy Director of EIS, as outlined above.

S GRIMASON

OFMDFM / Executive Internet Report December 2001

Key points

1. In the past year the OFMDFM web site has:

- Increased accesses from 12,000 per month to 300,000 per month.
- Grown from 12 pages of information to almost 1800 pages and 250 pdf files, (typically reports or consultation documents).
- Grown from one main site with two sub sites, (Service First and CITUNI), to main site plus 17 branches with their own web presence. Sub sites are being developed for a further three Divisions.
- 5,000 copies of the draft Programme for Government were downloaded from the website and 1,000 people reviewed the document online during the three month consultation period, (see note 3 below).
- In addition to simply providing information, the website has begun to exploit the potential for interactivity, for example in taking responses to consultation documents via the website and making these available to the public.

Statistical summary

2. Annex A gives a summary of access statistics for the Department.

Preferred Media

3. It is worth noting that when the Economic Policy Unit recently released the Draft Programme for Government they produced 1500 printed copies,

approximately 500 of which were for Assembly use. In contrast over 5000 adobe pdf copies of the programme were downloaded from the website. A further 1000 people reviewed the document on-line over the three month consultation period. This supports the trend noted by the Office of the e-Envoy in GB that increasingly the public is choosing to use government websites to access information.

Search Engines

4. The webteam undertakes search engine notification for the Executive and all OFMDFM websites. This involves compiling a concise description and key words for each unit and then placing this information within each page of their website (known as meta tags) and also placing the information with various popular search engines throughout the world.
5. Analysis is carried out quarterly to check how many search engines provide information on our sites when given specific keywords. Amendments are then made, where necessary, to the branch meta tags and the information re-submitted to the search engines. We submit information to 288 search engines via an automated program, however we focus particularly on the main search engines such as Yahoo, Google and Alta-Vista.
6. Our analysis program shows that entering keywords such as 'Office', 'First', 'Deputy' and 'Minister' will return an OFMDFM based website as the first entry in any results list generated by 64 search engines including Alta-Vista, AOL, Excite, Google, Lycos, MSN and Yahoo.

Website Development

7. There are several key issues being considered by Ministers and/or the Department which will have an impact on how the website develops in the coming year. These include:
 - **Corporate identity for the Executive.** This project is hopefully nearing completion. A re-design of the website has been delayed so that the new

branding can be included. In conjunction with this, the web team will carry out an analysis of all information now held on the website and work with directorates to develop a new website structure to better reflect the work of the Department.

- **Content Management** is a package that allows the input and amendment of information on a website by non-experts. By using this software, branches would be able to maintain their own sites with automatic checks being generated to manage the currency of the information. EIS has completed first draft documents for the content manager user specification and usage policy. We are currently finalising the business case. These documents will be used by ISU to procure a departmental wide content management system which will be integrated with the Lotus Notes/Knowledge Network. **The OFMDFM e-business strategy study** endorses this approach.
- **A review of the NICS presence on the web** by consultants is currently underway and a report is due in the next few weeks. The report is focusing on how the public access to government information can be developed using the web and other electronic methods via a government portal. It will also make recommendations on structures and resourcing to deliver the service.

The web team

8. The OFMDFM web team, part of EIS, provides an Internet service for the Executive and OFMDFM. The team provides the following services:

- Development of new websites for Divisions and branches;
- Updating of existing websites as required by Divisions;
- Search engine notification and statistical information; and
- Consultancy on matters relating to the Internet.

Costs

9. The webteam currently has two staff at AO level working full-time on web page creation and amendments. An AA updates the Executive press release pages, carries out search engine submissions and prepares statistical reports for customers. The team is managed by a DP with a technical background who spends approximately half his time working on internet related issues.
10. The cost of internet work carried out by the web team over the last year has amounted to £74,000, (using fully built up costs and including capital expenditure). Had this work been bought in from the private sector it is estimated the cost would have been at least £290,000 and it would have taken much longer to provide.
11. This comparison is based on the cost of similar projects placed with private sector companies by public bodies. We were assisted in the costing by BDS who are regularly involved in procurements for internet projects.

Annex A

Statistics

Accesses for Period November 2000 to November 2001

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
OFMDFM Dept	11,975	36,889	87,282	71,513	72,438	131,236	135,995	169,095	187,166	180,331	212,632	255,712	293,870
Press Releases	62,535	49,758	72,787	81,442	88,592	100,728	145,053	141,289	150,236	131,698	127,878	130,143	160,134
Executive	953,152	693,135	980,132	1,128,753	1,290,854	1,329,419	1,363,057	1,442,761	1,321,400	1,160,857	1,340,715	1,599,998	1,623,882

Hits for NICS main site, OFMDFM main site and OFMDFM units which have their own website.

Dept/Branch	November	October	September	August
OFMDFM Main Site	155,828	126,013	103,823	80,541
Human Rights	39,152	34,791	26,200	30,748
Service First	28,777	27,247	21,818	14,696
Children's Commissioner	20,194	18,793	21,980	20,536
CITUNI	15,832	13,142	11,730	7,423
New TSN	15,421	15,556	12,408	13,887
Victims	7,028	13,200	9,330	8,727
NI Bureau	5,709	1,119	1,105	1,131
CEPU	3,714	4,353	2,088	1,210
PSIU	3,353	3,430	4,108	2,136
Brussels Office	2,576	2,421	130	506
Total OFMDFM	297584	255716.353	214720	181541

Hits for Executive main site, Press Releases and PFG.

	November	October	September	August
Press releases	160,134	130,143	127,878	131,698
PFG	31,960	20,154	10,825	0
Total Executive	1,623,882	1,599,998	1,340,715	1,160,857

FROM: JOHN McKERVILL
EXECUTIVE INFORMATION SERVICE
7 FEBRUARY 2002

cc PS/Mr Loughran
Mr Grimason
Heads of Divisions
Mrs Armstrong
Mr Fee

Mr Haire
Mrs Bunting
Mr Gray
Mrs Flanagan
Mrs Devlin

A WEB PUBLISHING POLICY FOR OFMDFM

At its meeting on 23 January the Departmental Board agreed that the Department should develop a policy for publishing on the web. It was agreed that a small working group representative of the main functional areas of the Department should be set up to take this forward. I have been asked to chair the group.

The main issues the group has been asked to consider in developing a policy are:

- Strategic focus – what are the department's priorities for information publishing
- Editorial standards – guidance on what should be published and when, how it should be written, how it should be accessed, how it should look
- Roles and responsibilities
- Workflow
- Dealing with enquiries.

The background is set out more fully in the paper which went to the Departmental Board, copy attached.

I would be grateful if you would nominate someone to represent your directorate. Ideally, the person should be capable of representing and influencing the whole directorate, providing a conduit between it and the working group. But if you feel this is not possible for one individual, then more than one nominee would be acceptable. The nominees should be sufficiently senior (Grade 7 or DP I suggest) so that they can deal authoritatively with issues that will have considerable implications for the way the Department publishes information.

I would be grateful for nominations by Friday, 15 February.

(Signed)

JOHN McKERVILL

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