

UK Country Report

The Government On-Line International Network Project on Portals

1. Introduction

In March 1999, The government published the Modernising Government White Paper (MGWP) (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/moderngov/whtpaper/index.htm) which set out the Government's vision for the transformation of the delivery of public services. One of the key thrusts of the MGWP is the development of Information Age Government (IAG).

The MGWP sets out the target that 100% of government services are to be delivered electronically by 2008. In March 2000, The Prime Minister brought forward targets to speed up the development of e-government whereby 100% of services will be capable of being delivered electronically by 2005.

The UK Government has also implemented a process whereby departmental progress against these objectives can be tracked.

In April 2000, the e-Government Strategic Framework (www.e-envoy.gov.uk/ukonline/strategy.htm) was published which required all Departments to produce e-business strategies showing how they planned to implement electronic Government and service delivery taking into account technical policies, including compliance with the recommendations of Successful IT: Modernising Government in Action (published in May 2000) (http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/publications/successfulit_menu.htm)

In October 2000 all main central Government Departments produced initial e-business strategies (www.e-envoy.gov.uk/estrats.htm). These represent an important step towards achieving the Government's target that all services should be available online by 2005. They demonstrate the increasing importance of e-government in transforming the quality of services offered to individuals and to businesses. The second round of e-business strategies will be reviewed during summer 2001. These build upon the start made in the autumn, and show how Departments are progressing with the plans described then.

The overall objective of the Government is to transform the delivery of Government Services, so that they are based on customer needs rather than around the organisational structure of government. The departmental e-business strategies represent the first step towards that larger goal. Building on the foundation provided by the initial versions, Departments will develop their strategies to address the major challenges of e-government: working across organisation boundaries to deliver joined-up services; transforming the internal efficiency of government by organising to meet consumer needs not producer preference; putting e-government at the heart of strategic planning; and developing new partnerships in service delivery and using new technologies to enhance and enrich our democratic processes (e-democracy).

e-Champions (http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/ukonline/ukonline_menu.htm#champions) have been established to drive forward developments at the departmental level. Departmental Champions are also responsible for developing their departments' e-business strategies by October 2000.

Co-ordination of information age government issues is primarily the responsibility of the Office of the e-Envoy, in partnership with the e-Champions group to drive the programme forward.

The devolved administrations also have plans for the implementation of information age government in support of Modernising Government.

In February 2001, the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) published *Delivering Local Government Online*, setting out proposals for supporting the e-agenda at a local level. The paper was accompanied by guidance on Local Targets for Electronic Service Delivery, which was prepared by the Central Local Liaison Group. This group comprises DTLR, the Office of the e-Envoy (OeE), the Local Government Association, the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government and the Society of Information Technology Management (representing Local Government ICT Managers). In March 2001, the DTLR Local Government Minister announced that more than one hundred English councils are to take part in 25 pathfinder projects - to develop better, more accessible local services by harnessing the benefits of new technology. Each pathfinder is a partnership of councils, other public service agencies, local communities and the private sector with the aim of developing generic e-models, which can be scaled and replicated across the local government family. DTLR has also published guidelines for preparing Implementing Electronic Government statements (IEGs), which have been sent to every local authority in England. DTLR has asked for completed IEGs by the end of July 2001.

The Prime Minister is also committed to ensuring that the UK is the best place in the world for electronic commerce by 2002 and the e-Envoy (www.e-envoy.gov.uk) has been appointed to drive forward the e-commerce agenda. The Office of the e-Envoy is working with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors and internationally to develop:

- **Modern Markets** - facilitating e-commerce by promoting a light legal and regulatory approach to electronic trading, as well as ensuring that the UK fiscal framework also supports e-commerce.

Examples of steps taken include: Communications White Paper, Electronic Commerce directive, 3G and Broadband Fixed Wireless auctions, Internet Service Providers Association of the UK (IPSA) Code of Conduct, establishment of the Internet Watch Foundation.

- **Confident People and Business** - helping individuals and businesses take full advantage of ICTs, and ensuring that these opportunities are available to all. Provide universal Internet access, for everyone who wants it by 2005 and have 1 million SMEs trading online by 2002.

Examples of steps taken include: 1300 UK online centres, providing internet access and support in local communities up and running March 2001, 60% of public libraries connected, *UK online: the broadband future* action plan, 88% of schools connected, £700m to improve ICT infrastructure in schools, further education and higher education, and £230m to improve ICT skill levels among educators, and UK online for business advisors in over 100 local centres.

- **Market Analysis** - ensuring that government and business decisions are informed by reliable and accurate e-commerce monitoring and analysis.

Examples of steps taken include: quarterly Office of National Statistics household surveys, Department of Trade and Industry international benchmarking survey, *estatmap* published on Office of the e-Envoy website.

- Comments on suggested definition

The definition of a portal produced for the Office of the e-Envoy Portals Steering Group:

A Portal is a Web site that is or is intended to be the first place people see when using the Web, a user's "main point of entry" (hence "portal"). A "Portal site" has a catalogue of web pages/sites, a search engine, or both. It is structured around either an organisation (e.g. Cabinet Office) or an interest group (e.g. financial information). It also exhibits a number of characteristics to enhance the user's experience and to entice the user to make it there preferred starting point for the organisation/interest group in question.

A Portal as opposed to a web site, will exhibit the following Basic Portal Functionality:

- Main Entry Point
- Catalogue / Contents Page(s) or Search Engine
- Serves an Organisation or Interest Group

Portals should ideally exhibit the following additional characteristics:

- Support a range of Multiple Channels (e.g DTV, WAP, Kiosks)
- Support a range of Advanced Human Interfaces such as:
 - Intelligent Search
 - Minority Languages
 - Voice recognition
 - Speaking Pages
- Support options for Advanced Personalisation such as:
 - Page Customisation (e.g. Colours, Fonts, Content)
 - Discussion Groups
 - Subscription or Alerting Services (e.g. Email updates, SMS Alerts)
- Provide Joined Up Services
 - Packaged Information by need rather than department (e.g. Moving House)
- Provide Transactional Services
 - Provide the ability for citizens to conduct business on-line (e.g. Payments)

The current definition is focused around delivery of 'value-add' functionality in addition to the service the citizen or business actually requires.

For the terms of this paper, we agree the 'Portal' definition as stated, but would like to add 'Application', as a method of reaching citizen or business that concentrates solely on the service to be delivered.

This would mean that high end, high value services are distinct from the specific, focused service offerings available to the users of Government.

- Status and development

Portals

The UK Online citizen portal (ukonline.gov.uk) is a website which provides a single point of entry to a wide range of government information and services.

Content is organised around the needs of the citizen, to make dealing with government as easy and seamless as possible. Building on recommendations in the Modernising Government White Paper, information is focused around 'Life Episodes', which enable the user to access all the information they need about a particular event such as 'Having A Baby' or 'Learning to Drive' without having to understand the workings of government or departmental delivery structures.

The Portal primarily provides a structured way of accessing and linking to existing information available online. In the future, using the Portal in conjunction with the newly launched Government Gateway, it will become possible to carry out online transactions, like registering a birth online or submitting a tax return electronically.

Applications

In order to explain the concept and growth of applications, it is necessary to provide a summary of the Government Gateway (www.gateway.gov.uk) project.

The Government Gateway provides the single route for secure, authenticated transactions into back office systems. It acts as the 'middleware' and consists of self-contained software and infrastructure that sits between departmental back office systems and front office systems (such as internet portals).

Transactions themselves take the form of XML documents, where XML (eXtensible Markup Language) is a platform-independent language that allows specific pieces of information to be identified.

These transactions must conform to predefined document templates (called XML schema) created by the departments.

It is the use of XML schema that allows applications to provide specific services to the citizen or business.

Any individual or private company can write an application that enables a transaction with Government, as long as the output of that application matches a valid XML schema. This means that the actual presentation of that application, as a web page, a PC based programme, a WAP programme etc., can take whatever form the designers wish. A tax return form, for example, could be a duplicate of the paper based form on a web page on the Internet, or a series of multiple choice questions on a PC programme.

By using the Government Gateway as a central method of authentication, citizens or businesses can use any of the available applications to carry out a transaction, and even swap between them as appropriate.

Use of applications, even more than that of portals, can cause the complexity of government to disappear.

As an example of the visionary possibilities, a 'Starting a Business' transaction could notify Companies House, Inland Revenue, HM Customs and Excise etc. when the individual completes one simple form, maybe available on CD from his bank.

Currently in the UK, the growth of applications is centred around payroll vendors, who are including Pay As You Earn (PAYE) functionality into their payroll applications. This allows businesses to submit their year end forms to Government from the data already in the payroll application. This is a good example of the 'Application' definition, as an existing payroll programme would not qualify as a 'Portal', but still offers a unique service to its users.

More applications will be used as services are added to the Government Gateway.

2. Drivers of Change - Incentives and means

2.1 User Orientation

A wide range of approaches are being used to consult the public on the provision of electronic services. One of the key mechanisms being used in testing reaction to government modernisation issues is the People's Panel (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/consumerfocus/panel.htm). The Panel consists of 5,000 members of the public randomly selected from across the UK, and is designed to be a representative cross-section of the population (by gender, age, background, region, etc). The People's Panel has been used to consult the public on a range of e-Government issues.

In October 1998, the Central IT Unit (now part of the Office of the e-Envoy) published 'View from the Queue.' The report provided an integrated commentary on the findings from a market research study examining the propensity for take-up of electronic delivery of government services. The report covers research undertaken between November 1997 and July 1998 (<http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/moderngov/people/index.htm>).

The next round of departmental e-business strategies will include statements on how services are customer focused and not process led, driven by customer consultation and a customer segmentation strategy. This is in line with the wider Cabinet Office initiative, a consumer focus for public services, which aims to encourage services to be more responsive to their

user, with a focus on how consumers' views are built into an organisation's planning process and how the quality of service delivery is improved as a result (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/consumerfocus/index.htm)

The Department of Trade & Industry (www.dti.gov.uk) under its *IT for All* (www.itforall.org.uk) initiative has carried out research (www.itforall.org.uk/pdf/IT_FOR_ALL.pdf) into the public's attitudes towards IT and the take-up of technology.

The Ukonline strategy (which was agreed following extensive consultation with Government Departments) sets out clearly the Government's agenda. The strategy is published on the OeE website (www.e-envoy.gov.uk) and provides contact details for the relevant policy officials.

The CitizenSpace section of the ukonline.gov.uk Citizen Portal invites users to provide comments on the service and to suggest how services might be developed.

All framework policies have been, and will go, through full public consultation: the Government Interoperability Framework (e-GIF) has gone through industry and global consultation twice, as has the framework document for Metadata.

A website has also been set up to encourage the public and industry to input their views. The UK GovTalk website (www.govtalk.gov.uk) is dedicated to richer industry/global consultation and includes open processes for Request for Comments and Request for Proposals designed to engage industry and bring in innovation. GovTalk is also the central repository for XML schemas.

Many departments and agencies also actively seek the views of customers as part of the development process of introducing new electronic services. The most popular approach is through providing the facility to post feedback through a web-based form. This practice is set to increase in the future in line with the ongoing development of back office capability to deal with e-mail enquiries.

2.2 Other incentives

- **Funding arrangements:**

As a driver of change, the Year 2000 Spending Review identified a billion pounds of additional funding specifically for e-government projects during the period April 2001 to March 2004. Of this amount, £350 million (£25m/£135m/£190m) has been set aside to assist the development of the e-agenda at a local level in England. In addition, Round 3 of the Invest to Save Budget focussed on e-Government as its theme and awarded £47 million to projects in 2001-02. Finally, the Capital Modernisation Fund receives a high proportion of bids for e-government projects. All of these funding mechanisms require the possibilities of private sector partnership funding to have been exploited. The next Spending Review (2002) will naturally consider these and other mechanisms for funding electronic government.

The Ministerial Committee on Electronic Government has recently agreed a work programme which includes four pilot cost-benefit analysis projects for electronic services. Outputs from these projects will inform a wider analysis of electronic government which will take place

later in 2001-2002. Many services have already been improved – UK citizens and businesses can now file tax and VAT returns online, for example, and cost savings are expected in many areas.

- Legislation

In May 2000 the Electronic Communications Act was passed. This confirms the acceptability of electronic signatures and any supporting certificates as evidence in court. It also empowers Government departments to amend legislation to remove statutory barriers to the electronic delivery of services or to e-commerce. The Government has undertaken to complete within two years its review of legislation to be amended.

Legislation is also being prepared to implement the Electronic Commerce Directive 2000/31/EC and to complete the implementation of the Electronic Signatures Directive 1999/93 EC, already partly implemented by the Electronic Communications Act.

- Central Co-ordination in public sector:

The Performance and Innovation Unit 'e-commerce@its.best.uk' report identified that two defining features of those major economies which are ahead of the UK are:

- the way in which they maximise the overall impact of their programmes through careful and detailed co-ordination; and
- the political and managerial capital and priority they accord to achieving success in e-commerce.

The report therefore identified the need to have both political and official leadership and co-ordination of the information age programme.

The role of the e-Minister is:

- Political leadership & co-ordination;
- Developing political strategy;
- Single point of contact for industry & media; and
- Chair of 'Information Age' Ministerial Network.

The role of the e-Envoy is:

- Galvanising UK business;
- Developing and reviewing strategic thinking;
- Promoting UK e-commerce strategy internationally;
- Co-ordinating e-Government strategic thinking; and
- Ensuring 'e-inclusion'.

The relationship between the e-Minister and the e-Envoy is that they together report directly to the Prime Minister, with a monthly written report and a quarterly face-to-face report.

Incentives/means for smaller communities or units with limited resources and web solutions skills

Local online content is an important element in motivating people to use the Internet, particularly those in deprived communities.

Development of a local portal is at the heart of the 7 Wired up Communities pilot schemes, covering 12,000 homes in some of the most deprived and isolated communities in the country. All of the homes in these areas will be connected to the Internet and a community portal will be developed, enabling access to local and central Government services, and allowing the development of local content. The scheme has been allocated £10m funding until March 2002 and decisions about the future roll out of the scheme will be made in the light of the evaluation of the pilot schemes.

3. Portals – Future Development and Strategies

- Status, visions, strategies

The status for ukonline.gov.uk is that it has been launched and is currently providing user-focused services to the citizen.

The vision is that it will become the preferred point of entry for citizens wishing to interact with government.

- Applying metadata ('cross-portal standards')

Essential components of the e-Government Strategy are the Interoperability Framework (e-GIF) and the e-Government Metadata Framework (e-GMF). Joined-up Government needs joined-up information systems. The e-GIF sets out the policy and standards for interoperability across the public sector and also sets the architecture for joined-up and web-enabled government, for the UK Online Portal and Gateway, and for Electronic Service Delivery. The e-GMF sets out the policies for establishing and implementing metadata standards across the public sector that will allow efficient exploitation of government information.

The e-GIF was initially launched by the Minister for e-Government in September 2000 following wide consultation across the public and private sectors both within the UK and Internationally. It reflects best practice and advice from experts in both the public and private sectors. Version 2 was published on 4 May and is available at www.govtalk.gov.uk

The e-GIF:

- Adopts Internet and World Wide Web standards for all government systems.
- Adopts XML (the data language of the Internet) as the key standard for data interchange.
- Adopts Standards that are well supported by the market
- Aims to reduce the cost and risk for government systems
- Makes the Browser the key interface for access and manipulation of all information.

The e-GMF was published in May 2001, again following wide consultation, and approval by the Minister for e-Government. It is also available on www.govtalk.gov.uk. It has two main headline decisions:

- Firstly, that the UK Government has adopted simple Dublin Core as the UK Metadata Standard (e-GMS), This will be enhanced to include additional elements and refinements in due course.
- Secondly, we will develop a Pan-Government Thesaurus that will contain a structured list of terms and keywords to aid retrieval of information.

The frameworks are mandated for all new systems and for all outward facing legacy systems, ie those that are needed to meet ESD targets.

They apply to all interactions between UK Government Departments, between UK Government and the wider public sector, between UK Government and citizens/businesses, and between UK Government and foreign governments.

The e-GIF and e-GMF provide an implementation strategy using the UK GovTalk website as the mechanism for consultation and communication. The UK GovTalk website is being widely used for all interoperability and metadata work.

The Office of the e-Envoy monitors the guidelines for UK Government websites. These can be found at: <http://www.eenvoy.gov.uk/publications/guidelines/webguidelines/websites/index.htm>

• **Future challenges**

The main challenges for the future are for ukonline.gov.uk to offer multilingual, multi-channel capabilities, and to offer secure access and transactions (see the case study below for further discussion of the future challenges).

Development of service which cross departmental boundaries:

e-Government gives us a tremendous opportunity to move away from the producer silos which dominate government service delivery at every level and focus much more on organising around service users. The life episodes in the UK online Citizen Portal (ukonline.gov.uk) have started to demonstrate both the potential of this approach and some of the issues we will need to address in providing services in this way.

e-Government is about managing change, not about IT:

e-Government is about the whole of government and everything it does: it is much more than providing services online. A recent industry report rightly stressed that “e-Government will have failed if the structures of government remain untouched and the processes simply get faster and easier to use”. There is tremendous scope for improving the internal efficiency of government – which will in turn enable it to deliver better quality services. But as in any change programme, there is a need for clear direction and leadership.

There will be different ways of working with commercial and other partners:

The increased emphasis on the needs of consumers, both individuals and businesses, will require a different sort of relationship with them from the traditional government approach. Ideas for innovative services to meet the needs of particular consumer groups will often come from outside government, and involve a mixture of government and non-government services. We need to be ready to engage with those ideas and reflect their openness to new thinking and in their strategic planning.

- **Portal samples**

UK Online Citizen Portal Case Study

Strategy/Policy

The UK Online citizen portal (ukonline.gov.uk) is a website which provides a single point of entry to a wide range of government information and services.

The site is a key part of the UK Online initiative, launched by the Prime Minister on 11 September. The initiative's threefold aim is to ensure universal access to the Internet by 2005, to get all Government services online by that date and to make Britain one of the world's leading knowledge economies.

The priority in developing the site has been to ensure that it is friendly and accessible whether you're a new or a frequent Internet user. Content is organised around the needs of the citizen, to make dealing with government as easy and seamless as possible. Building on recommendations in the Modernising Government White Paper, information is focused around 'Life Episodes', which enable the user to access all the information they need about a particular event such as 'Having A Baby' or 'Learning to Drive' without having to understand the workings of government or departmental delivery structures.

The current site is just the beginning. The way people use the site and the feedback we receive will drive how we develop and improve it, and new content and transactional services will be added over time.

The Citizens Portal went live on 4 December 2000, and was formally launched on 19 February 2001. To date there have been 25.7 million site hits and 6.8 million page impressions. There are 20,000 registered users (i.e. people who have chosen to give their details and who can take part in discussions).

Details of current portal & range of services available

There are currently nine life episodes:

- Moving Home
- Having a Baby
- Going Away
- Dealing with Crime
- Learning to Drive

- Death and Bereavement
- Looking After Someone
- Looking for a Job
- Pensions and Retirement

The portal also contains other services and features, including:

- 'Quick Find' - a powerful search engine which guides users directly to the right information, allowing people to cut through the maze of government.
- Real time government news, providing an easy way to keep in touch with announcements and advice.
- 'Citizen Space' – a section to make it easy for people to find out about government's plans, and contribute to the formulation of new policies on which the public are being invited to have their say. There is also easy to find information about elected representatives and registering to vote.
- 'Easy Access' pages, which give simpler access to the Portal for those who are visually impaired or have low reading skills. This works especially well with alternative digital access media.
- Access to the established open.gov website

Plans for the future

Multiple access media channels

The government is working on a programme to add new media and channels to ukonline.gov.uk. Work has already started with digital TV, WAP phones and kiosks. This work will continue to ensure universal and inclusive access for all citizens.

Advanced human interfaces

ukonline.gov.uk currently provides an extensive search and query facility through 'Quickfind'. The vision is to develop the advanced human technology interfaces using multimedia capabilities working on three fronts:

- intelligent and natural language search;
- output in multiple languages;
- interaction through voice recognition.

Advanced personalisation

ukonline.gov.uk currently allows you to personalise information based on where you live and a choice of language. Although much will depend on citizen feedback, future developments will concentrate on increasing the depth of personalisation in two ways:

- giving choice of colours, configurations and images;
- offering personalised updates on government information and services with which an individual citizen is currently engaged.

Joined-up service delivery

The current range of life episodes have been based on initial research and feedback on the most popularly requested services that citizens wanted to be delivered first. We plan to add further life episodes based on customer feedback including:

- Starting/changing school
- Moving on from school

We will also continue to work with public and private sector organisations to integrate life episode information such that an enriched and comprehensive service is delivered to the citizen.

Transactional services

ukonline.gov.uk is intended to be much more than just joined-up information. In conjunction with the Government Gateway, it will enable citizens to interact and transact fully with government.

Lessons learnt

The development of ukonline.gov.uk has required coherent integration of government infrastructure, systems, processes and services. The scale of change required to deliver ukonline.gov.uk is immense. The government's strategy has therefore been to focus initially on what the citizen finds most valuable. The future development of the site will be based on feedback from citizens and government stakeholders.

Whilst the Office of the e-Envoy is responsible for the policy, standards and operational running of ukonline.gov.uk, a crucial factor to ensure success has been an effective partnership programme across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

ukonline.gov.uk has not replaced direct contact with public service providers. Instead it offers citizens choice in the way they access government services.

Benefits

The Prime Minister has set a target of offering all government services electronically by 2005. ukonline.gov.uk is one of the groundbreaking projects set in motion to help meet that target. It provides all UK citizens with a single point of entry into government information and services, available at any time.

It will also help revolutionise the relationship between government and the citizen by transforming the way services are delivered. Services are tailored to the needs of the citizen, instead of being organised around government structures, helping them to cut through the maze of online government. In conjunction with the Government Gateway (a world-leading project making secure Internet transactions with government possible), ukonline.gov.uk will offer the citizen a quick and easy means of carrying out transactions with the government over the Internet.

- **Application examples**

Users are able to carry out transactions from various applications that would not be classified as portals. For example:

- Inland Revenue – users can send their tax returns electronically. They can also save, print and post their form should they wish
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – users are able to submit IACS Area Aid Applications electronically
- HM Customs and Excise – users can complete their VAT forms electronically
- Sage Accounting Software – users can automatically submit their PAYE information using their desktop Sage accounting software

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The Government Gateway Case Study

Strategy/Policy for Gateway

The UK Government conducts 5 billion transactions a year with citizens and businesses, spread over 20 large departments, 480 local authorities and 200+ agencies. The UK online programme aims to make these transactions available on-line in a joined up fashion by the end of 2005.

The Government Gateway is a cornerstone of the UK online initiative. It provides the single route for transactions into back office systems. It acts as the ‘middleware’ and consists of self contained software and infrastructure that sits between departmental back office systems and front office applications, such as departmental websites, portals (such as ukonline.gov.uk) and commercial applications.

After a citizen or business registers to perform electronic transactions, they can carry out secure authenticated transactions with any of the connected departments using the same identification credential. This will bring the convenience of single sign-on for online services.

The use of a central common infrastructure will also provide economy of scale benefits to Government through a 'build-once, use-many' architecture. For example, when the Gateway implements a new piece of functionality, that functionality will be available to all departments connected to the Gateway. This removes the need for multiple individual implementations.

Details of the Gateway

The Government Gateway accepts, authenticates and routes electronic transactions with Government.

Transactions themselves take the form of XML documents, where XML (eXtensible Markup Language) is a platform-independent language that allows specific pieces of information to be identified. These transactions must conform to predefined document templates (called XML schemas) created by the departments.

Using XML schemas is an innovative move. Front end applications, on Government web sites, commercial portals or third party applications can be written to suit the needs of the target audience, as long as the XML output by the application meets the XML schema specification. This could result in a transaction being displayed as an e-form, or as a series of multiple choice questions, or any other user interface that suits customer needs. This greatly increases personal choice for the user, as they can choose the application most suited to them.

The Gateway also authenticates transaction, which is crucial as it allows government to be certain that a transaction actually comes from the individual claiming to send it.

The Government Gateway has worked with both Government standards for authentication, and tScheme, a self regulating industry body for transactional security, to provide two methods of authentication: either a user ID and password combination, or a digital certificate which can be used to digitally sign transactions. The choice of which method to use will depend on the required security of the transaction.

Once a transaction has been authenticated and validated it is routed to the relevant back office system for processing.

Range of Services Accessible via Gateway/Plans for the Future

The first three transactions enabled by the Government Gateway are:

- PAYE End of Year returns for Inland Revenue
- VAT returns for HM Customs and Excise
- IACS (Integrated Administration and Control System) Area Aid Applications for Department of the Environment, Food and Regional Affairs

These transactions went live in March 2001. Further transactions will be added throughout 2001 and beyond.

The aim is to continue to develop the Government Gateway, both in terms of the functionality it offers and the transactions available to both citizens and businesses.

The way forward includes the following plans to develop the Government Gateway:

- Provide a common payment facility to accept credit cards, debit cards and direct debit instructions
- Provide a secure facility to enable citizens and businesses to receive electronic outputs from government.
- Facilitate joined-up transactions
- Integrate with more certificate providers to increase choice of digital IDs.

Benefits and Savings

For citizens and businesses, the Government Gateway:

- Provides access to all government services (in central departments, devolved administrations and local authorities) using one single authentication credential
- Will be available constantly (24x7), enabling transactions to be sent at any time and has the capacity to handle high volumes for peak filing periods
- Provides the infrastructure required for true joined up Government by splitting and joining XML transactions. A user can send one transaction that involves several departments, while the underlying complexity remains hidden
- Accepts XML transactions from any Government portal, commercial portal or third party application, as long as it matches a recognised schema.

For government, the Gateway:

- Creates economies of scale through a ‘build once, use many’ infrastructure, allowing connected parties to use Gateway functionality rather than each building its own
- Provides a central infrastructure to facilitate joined-up government
- Enables departments to deliver innovative transactions to their customers

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