

Information provided by the Fire Brigades Union to CLG Select Committee

24 February 2010

General concern re End User Requirements not being met by FiReControl

A. SOLUTION ESTABLISHMENT WORKSHOPS

On 26 November 2008 the Fire Minister at the time, Sadiq Khan, announced a nine month delay to the project stating:

"...a number of difficulties with the ICT and other dimensions of the project were identified. These issues will result in some delay, and the FRS rightly expects us to address these in full.

On 15 July 2009, the new Fire Minister, Shahid Malik announced a further ten month delay stating that the reasons as being:

"... in recent months it has become clear that technical problems with developing the IT system in a way which will meet all our and FRS requirements mean that further time is needed to complete the project."

On both occasions the reasons for the delay were said to be the result of technical problems with the I(C)T. On the occasion of the latter announcement, CLG announced the introduction of Solution Establishment Workshops in order to discuss end user problems/ perspective/ requirements:

"The Minister also explained improvements to the project approach. Joint CLG and EADS (the main contractor) teams would be working on a day-to-day basis with the Fire and Rescue Service. A series of Solution Establishment Workshops have started at EADS, involving the CLG team, FRS representatives and EADS."

(Source: FRS Circular 43/2009)

We do find it somewhat disconcerting that CLG announced a delay of a specific period (ten months) and *then* began dialogue with end users the problems and requirements that they have.

The FBU is concerned that the announcement of a delay was one month before the consultation with end users regarding their requirements had started. The conclusion that we draw is that either the consultation is cosmetic or that the 10 month period was plucked out of the air. Either way, we are not confident that the announced timetable and promise of taking the outcomes of the consultations seriously can be assured.

B. DATA CAPTURE

EADS have been rolling out a presentation regarding the latest developments on data capture. A copy of the presentation is enclosed. EADS have notified stakeholders that DCMT2 will not be available until five months after the relevant Change Notice has been signed, and consequently may be as late as August. They also stated that the Intergraph system is currently only 60-70% compliant with updates not being made until July and September. Because of the very tight timeline to the May 2011 cutover date a further delay is now expected.

C. PLAN B

The Regional Control Centre project has been around for some considerable time now. Early promises of introduction in 2007 were wildly optimistic. The current first cutovers are now said to be possible in May 2011.

Throughout that period investment in the local control rooms has been held back.

From a human perspective, the staff have been left on tenterhooks concerning what the future holds for them and their families.

The fire and rescue service, the public and the staff deserve to be informed of what plans are in existence/ preparation for something as significant as the organisation and delivery of their emergency fire service control function.

Despite that, CLG state that they have a "Plan B". Disgracefully, this is being kept back from the public and staff due to CLG insisting on unnecessary, in appropriate and undemocratic secrecy. CLG did not even declare it to the Select Committee hearing on 8 February 2010.

The FBU believes that if there truly is a Plan B it should be made known. Given the experience of the RCC project (failed targets, inoperable system, weak consultation, exponential growth in costs) it is imperative then it must be

declared to see if it is a. viable and b. more robust than the apparent panacea which RCCs were promised to be.