

UK MAN Managers Group

Notes of Meeting held on 10 January 2007 at HEFCE, London

Present:

Dave Vinograd (Convenor)	
Kit Powell (Secretary)	SWERN
Jason Bain	NorMAN
Ed Carter	YHMAN
Geoff Cooper	LMN
Barry Forde	C&NLMAN (<i>items 1-5</i>)
Brian Gilmore	EaStMAN
David Hayling	Kentish MAN
Jim Hendry	MidMAN
Chris Kelly	NIRAN
Paul Kentish	Kent MAN
Andrew Kerl	LMN
John Linn	AbMAN
Linda McCormick	ClydeNET
Steve Percival	UKERNA (<i>from item 6</i>)
Tim Robinson	NetNorthWest
Denis Russell	UKERNA (<i>from item 6</i>)
David Stedham	North Wales MAN
Jem Taylor	UHI
Pete White	LMN
Mike Whitehead	FaTMAN
Roger Williams	WNL

Apologies were received from:

Joe Burns	NIRAN
Mike Byrne (Deputy Convenor)	LeNSE
Ian Griffiths	EMMAN
Jim Leitch	EaStMAN
Mark Jameson	C&NLMAN
Andy Mason	SWERN
Malcolm Pitcher	NetNorthWest
Ian Sugden	SWERN

1 Notes of previous meeting

1.1 Accuracy

There were no corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 October 2006.

1.2 Briefing note on the issues surrounding SPB provision

Tim Robinson had circulated this before the meeting, and summarised its contents verbally.

The following points emerged:

- Applications for SPB (which was likely to be re-badged when it became a production service) would require only UKERNA approval. However, the institution receiving the service would have to enter into an undertaking to deliver the service to the end user from the point at which the RN delivered it to site.
- Each RN would be provided with a single UKERNA Ciena unit for SPB, in addition to those used by Verizon to deliver SJ5.
- Users would be made fully aware from the start of the non-resilient nature of the service.
- There was no requirement to monitor the operation and availability of this type of service, and it was agreed that this might in any case be difficult to achieve.
- Both SPB and UKLIGHT services would be covered in RPAN3.

It was agreed that these services should be a routine item for future meetings of the Group.

Action: Secretary

2 Report from contract changes team

Paul Kentish said that all RNOs had now signed RPAN2.5, and there was nothing further to report. It was agreed to remove this item from the agenda of future meetings of the Group.

Action: Secretary

3 RPAN3

3.1 Constitution of contract changes team

Dave Vinograd said that he expected the negotiations to start in the next two to three [months](#) and run well into the Summer; he was therefore disqualifying himself from membership as he would be out of the country for the latter part of the negotiations, but was happy to scrutinise drafts for possible pitfalls. The JISC had agreed to pay for professional advice to the team.

Dave's understanding was that the new contract was being drawn up by UKERNA from scratch, and that the general principles were to be those already published, which would not be subject to dilution during the negotiations.

It was agreed that the final draft must be ready by September 2007, to allow alternative arrangements to be put in place for any region whose RNO decided not to enter into it. It was also noted that delays in the introduction of [RPAN3](#) could affect RNOs' reprocurement plans. Other particular issues might exist for the lead sites in consortium RNOs, whose perception of risk might differ from that of limited liability companies. Linda McCormick's view was that it was more important that varieties of governance and organisation be represented in the negotiations than of size or geography. The Group agreed to this approach.

It was noted that a major part of the contract would be the service definition, which in turn would to a great extent depend on on-going negotiations between UKERNA and the JISC on the JANET SLA.

Tim Robinson said that the UKERNA/RN funding model working group had met once, and was to meet again on 15 January. It was agreed to ask UKERNA for visibility of the evolution of the working group's views before its conclusions were finally published.

Noting that the previously-published RPAN3 timetable had already slipped, the Group also agreed to ask UKERNA for a more detailed timetable its drafting, noting that we believe that at least 12 months' notice would be needed to allow RNs wishing to disengage to do so.

As to the constitution of the team, it was agreed that:

1. It should have four members, to allow for members' occasional absence.
2. One member should have served on the team negotiating a previous RPAN contract.
3. Members of the team should be identified as the leads on: financial and commercial issues; company, governance and risk issues; and service definitions.

Action: Convener

The team should actively consult and brief the Group during the negotiations and draw on the Group's collective pool of expertise and experience.

John Linn pointed out that as the Group was negotiating with authority delegated by the Chairs of MANs Group, they should be kept informed of progress. It was agreed that this could be done by the minutes being available to CoM (which they are) and the cross-membership between the groups.

3.2 Implications for RNO/RSC roles

[This whole item does not apply to Wales.]

Ed Carter said that the new contracts for RSCs, running for three years to July 2010, included no remit for them to extend any operational support for the network services of institutions. Thus the MANs would be responsible for delivery of JANET service to the B-end of the access circuit, the site would be responsible for its own campus network, and UKERNA would own and hold the maintenance contract for the boundary router. In practice, there is a large variance in the amount and source of support and configuration (as opposed to maintenance) for sites' boundary equipment: some sites are autonomous, others rely on the RSC, and some on the RNO. It was a goal of RPAN3 to regularise and formalise this situation.

It was not possible during discussion to identify an arrangement that would satisfy the needs of all client sites and RNOs. For example, the following were mooted:

- RNO providing, configuring, and supporting, a router at the B-end of the circuit; this gives visibility for management and monitoring, but on the other

hand, for technically competent sites, introduces a single point of failure with no appreciable benefit

- RNO configuring the client's own boundary router: this is difficult if the site wants it to perform functions other than routing (e.g. firewalling)
- RSC configuring client boundary router: not part of the new contract.

There was however full agreement that RPAN3 should define exactly where and on what the service delivery point of JANET at a site was, and identify what the RNO's responsibilities were.

3.3 RNO views on RPAN3 progress

Previous discussion had covered this.

4 Report the SLA negotiation team

Jason Bain said that as the "root and branch" review body is a committee of JISC, its membership was a JISC issue; he had not been invited to join it. Although, as previously noted, members of the Group were on the committee, they were there in other roles (e.g. Tim Robinson representing JCN).

The group agreed that the views of RNOs needed to be expressed; Dave Vinograd agreed to take the matter up with the Chair of the committee.

Action: Dave Vinograd

5 Report from JDAG

Jason Bain reported that JDAG had met in October. The development programme had been discussed.

At this meeting UKERNA had announced its intention to replace JDAG with a shadow Technical Design Authority after its next meeting in April.

David Hayling pointed out that JDAG was in fact established as part of RPAN2.5. Others added that the TDA's membership and duties were to be defined by RPAN3, which did not yet exist even in draft. John Linn noted that under RPAN3 the TDA would acquire powers to, for example, specify what technical solutions might be sought in a procurement, and these powers would not be available to a shadow TDA unsupported by the contract.

It was agreed that although it was desirable that before RPAN3 came into force the TDA existed and was working well, it was not sensible for a shadow version to come into existence before all its aspects were defined in the final RPAN3 draft.

6 UKERNA issues

Dave Vinograd gave Denis Russell the Group's thanks for his work with us over the past three years, and our best wishes for his retirement.

The meeting wished that this, a formal record of their thanks, be made.

It was agreed that in the light of Denis's successful term, UKERNA should consider making another similar appointment in the future.

Denis Russell then reported as follows:

All RNs, with the exception of MidMAN (due 11 January) were now connected to SJ5.

There had been some teething problems, some caused by operation of unfamiliar equipment and architecture. He expected these to be rapidly resolved. It was too early to comment on the long-term reliability of the new infrastructure.

UKERNA would probably stage an event in 1Q07 to de-brief RNOs on the SJ5 roll-out, and take a look forward to further developments.

The exercise to identify and mitigate route commonality problems in the various Verizon and RN cable paths used for SJ5 backbone and regional links was complete. Some problems had been found, and were being addressed, in NorMAN and NetNorthWest. An additional fibre link between Lancaster and Carlisle was being jointly funded by UKERNA and C&NLMAN. Information for AbMAN was still being gathered. He requested that if and when other problems of this sort emerged UKERNA should be informed so that they could be addressed.

Most English RNOs were on track to meet their SJ5 upgrade spending profile by the end of March. Penny Gould would be contacting RNOs to elicit, by the end of January, firm statements on the position of their spends. Underspends that had not been notified well in advance were, as always, a problem - to be avoided by giving notification as soon as their likelihood emerged.

He had produced a report for the Scottish Funding Council giving revised profile for the HE and FE spends and proposals for virement between them. He repeated his request for timely notification of underspends.

Roger Williams asked what UKERNA's timetable was for switching off SJ4 and collecting the old SJ4 UKERNA equipment on RNO sites. Denis replied that UKERNA wanted a longer period of confidence running SJ5 before switching off SJ4. If there was an pressing problem Baoyu Wang should be told; otherwise it was planned to remove units not later than the end of March. It was noted that UKERNA had sought bids for surplus equipment from the community last year.

Linda McCormick asked if it was still a requirement to conduct a fail-over test with a full production load; Denis said that it was. John Linn reported that when AbMAN's connection had failed over in full production the only noticeable effect had been a brief interruption to a multicast-based video-conference.

David Hayling asked what procedures were in place to ensure that scheduled maintenance work was not carried out on both an RN's RNEPs simultaneously (by the RNO and UKERNA, for example). Denis will pursue this question and report.

Steve Percival reported as follows:

He thanked those who had given comments on the new guidelines for reporting under the terms of the RPAN contract; he would be meeting the NRG to discuss these and a new version of the document would be issued reflecting them.

The request to start using the new codes had been issued in error, and rescinded.

SLA negotiations. Tim Kidd and Shirley Wood had met JISC before Christmas to discuss the “root-and-branch” review. The SLA would be split into a Memorandum of Understanding, and a Service Definition, requiring two new documents to be written. Steve had suggested that current SLA targets should not be changed until this had been done, and then the negotiations of changes could start.. This being the case, there was no requirement for RN involvement in the near future.

The LSC had agreed upgrades for all English FE connections to 10Mbps. The sites in question were in SWERN, LeNSE, EMMAN, and MidMAN. ACL would not be involved in this exercise.

The 17 ULCC staff working in the NOSC had been transferred to UKERNA, but the majority would continue to be based in London. The JANET Operations Desk and JANET Customer Service operations had been merged to form the JANET Service Desk.

In March, UKERNA would move to new accommodation, still on the Harwell site.

The RPAN3 funding model study group had met once, and would do so again the following week.

Dave Vinograd requested that the considerations of the funding model study group should be made available to the Group as they were produced, given the wide and varied impact of financial matters on RNOs and possible local issues arising from them. Steve said that this was not a problem, in principle, and he would circulate relevant documents as they were produced.

Dave also asked for a more detailed timetable for the production of the RPAN3 contract agreed text, noting the potential problems if this were not available before September 2007.

The Group’s concerns about the replacement of JDAG by the shadow TDA were voiced. There was consensus that moving responsibility was acceptable, but should only start when the RPAN3 contract drafting was complete. Steve agreed, and pointed out that after its next meeting JDAG would not in any case be meeting again before it was planned to finish drafting.

7 Review of RN SuperJANET5 connection progress

This matter had already been covered. It was agreed to drop it from future agendas.

Action: Secretary

8 Liaison with Chairs of MANs Group

Ed Carter said that neither the main nor the RPAN review groups had met since the last Group meeting.

Dave Vinograd asked Steve Percival what he thought ought to be the path for UKMMG to report back on the progress of the RPAN3 negotiations. Steve promised to enquire about, and consider, the matter.

9 UCISA-NG

Tim Robinson said that Ian Griffiths, as UCISA-NG Chair, would be reporting in future. Ian would be UCISA's representative on the SLA study group.

A note had been sent to IT directors about SJ5 resilience tests being carried out under production loading.

The results of the pilot study for out-of-hours help desk services would be published in February.

10 Dates of future meetings

Tuesday 24 April 2007, Birkbeck London (LMN to pay for catering)

Tuesday 26 June 2007, Manchester (NetNorthWest to arrange venue and pay for catering)

11 Other business

11.1 Venues for future meetings

Jem Taylor pointed out that wherever meetings were held attendance in person was bound to involve long and time-consuming journeys for some members. Whilst he fully accepted that participation by video-conference was second best, it was still better than not attending at all.

The consensus was that much of the benefit of the Group's meetings derived from the opportunity to discuss matters outside their formal context, and that this justified lengthy journeys. However, Jem's point was good, and it was agreed to investigate the possibility of some sort of remote participation short of a full video-conference.

Action: all (to suggest means), Secretary

11.2 RNO RPAN3 intentions

Linda McCormick asked what intentions RNOs overall had expressed in respect of entering into the RPAN3 contract. Denis Russell replied that all had said they were willing in principle to operate the new arrangements, with caveats of varying strengths being made. David Stedham pointed out that, since a single RPAN holding body was planned for Wales under the AWPSN project, the NWMAN had not responded.