

UK MAN Managers Group

Notes of Meeting held on 29 June 2005 at Inverness

Present:

Mike Byrne (Deputy Convenor)	LeNSE
Kit Powell (Secretary)	SWERN
Paul Kentish	Kentish MAN
Tim Robinson	NetNorthWest
Ed Carter	YHMAN
David Hayling	Kentish MAN
Mike Whitehead	FaTMAN
Jason Bain	NorMAN
Joe Burns	NIRAN
John Linn	AbMAN
George Howat	EaStMAN (from item 3)
Jim Hendry	MidMAN
Jem Taylor	UHI Network
Ian Griffiths	EMMAN (from item 2.1)
Mark Jameson	C&NLMAN
Phil Brady	North Wales MAN (from item 2)
Steve Percival	UKERNA (from item 5)
Denis Russell	UKERNA (from item 5)

Apologies were received from:

Dave Vinograd (Convenor)	
Chris Cheney	“EastNet”
Andy Mason	SWERN
Linda McCormick	ClydeNET
Roger Williams	WNL

1 Notes of previous meeting

2 Accuracy

There were no corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 April 2005.

2.1 UKERNA monitoring equipment re-start after power failure

Mick Kahn wrote to UKERNA. There was no record of any response, and the communication will be re-sent to Steve Percival and Denis Russell to pursue.

Action: Kit Powell

2.2 Concern about rate of progress of JDAG

Jason Bain had complained about this. A response was received from Bob Day and forwarded to the Group.

2.3 Liaison with NHS

Tim Robinson reported that he had attended a meeting on 25 May, which had had a large attendance. His impression was that the attention of NHS networking staff was focussed on N3 and NHS connections to it, with little time devoted to non-NHS connections (which were a small minority).

The NHSIA had been replaced. A working group, which he was a member of, had been set up by its successor to look at an NHS-JANET gateway. He did not expect that any practical result would be achieved in the near future.

3 RPAN contract

3.1 Comments and report on development effort changes

The general impression was that UKERNA was adopting a flexible approach to the RNOs' plans for spending the £55,000 annual payment. Claims against the funding had been passed, including some for employment of consultants.

3.2 SuperJANET5 changes

Mike Byrne reported. The negotiating team had changed: Chris Cheney had replaced Mick Kahn, and had himself later been replaced by Paul Kentish in response to UKERNA's expressed preference for a member who was involved in running an RPAN contract

A meeting arranged for 1 June had been cancelled. The state of negotiations was thus that described in the minutes of the 18 April meeting, which he had circulated to the Group.

The main area in which UKERNA seemed to be pressing for changes was out-of-hours cover. As had been discussed at the last RUSI meeting, Tim Kidd had identified three possible levels of enhancement to the current cover:

- a. Increasing the maintenance cover for the regional network during Extended Hours so that the maintenance suppliers will respond to calls for maintenance during this time (Working Days 17:00 to 22:00, all other days excluding Public Holidays 09:00 to 18:00). This would include telecommunications suppliers for the regional network core and for regional network routing equipment (etc).
- b. As (a) above, plus increasing the Extended Hours to cover the periods: Working Days 17:00 to 08:00 (the next day), and 24 hours a day for all other days excluding Public Holidays. Where third party maintenance covers the existing Extended Hours time only (as defined in (a) above).
- c. Increasing the Extended Hours to cover the periods: Working Days 17:00 to 08:00 (the next day), and 24 hours a day for all other days excluding Public Holidays. Where third party maintenance covers the new Extended Hours time as well as Working Hours.

Tim Kidd would be circulating MANs to ask for estimates of the cost of providing these levels. After discussion the Group agreed that:

- a reasonable time to respond to the questionnaire must be given, and that it would be preferable for our responses to have some consistency
- RNOs should exchange as much information as they could on how they thought the problem could be tackled;
- the possibility of procuring a joint call desk and support centre shared by more than one RN should be investigated.

It was noted that outside contractors' staff had been found to have difficulty in grasping the complexities of MANs' structure. Contracted-out 24*7 monitoring cover typically costs £30-45,000 a year.

In a general discussion on out-of-hours cover it was clear that the requirement was user-driven, and varied greatly depending on the type of institution and user community. The Group doubted that these diverse requirements could all be satisfied in an affordable way.

It was agreed to await the questionnaire, and to share our proposed responses to it.

Ian Griffiths remarked that following the reduction in the LSC's JISC contribution, senior management in UKERNA were questioning the desirability of the multiplicity of RNOs and the overheads that maintaining the contractual and operational relationship with them entailed.

It was pointed out that although RNOs were in principle happy to house additional measuring and monitoring points, the implications had to be explored. PoPs, where it seems likely they will be located, are frequently on premises which the RNO neither owns nor has ready access to. Investigating non-communicating monitoring devices might require significant staff effort, and it would have to be done if their output was to be meaningful. These concerns would be taken forward by the negotiating team.

Regarding the organisation of scheduled maintenance and the suggestion that engineering work which carried a low risk to the service could be carried out with a less-formal notification regime, John Linn asked that a straightforward on-line diary of planned work should be maintained. This would enable those planning work to avoid potential clashes, which could impact on service, with other activities. The issue of dual-SJ5 link testing was also raised and John Linn agreed to draft some comments on this for discussion by the group.

Action: John Linn

3.3 SJ5 funding RPAN amendment

Mike Byrne reported on the negotiations, which had been arduous. There had been several drafts, the latest of which had been circulated to the Group. A particularly difficult clause had been 7.17 which Bob Day, who had replaced Tim Kidd on the UKERNA team for this particular item, insisted was necessary to reflect funds passing to the RNOs through UKERNA rather than, as had previously been the case, direct from the funding councils. The Group's negotiators had been successful in making this clause less onerous, and felt that the current draft was as far as UKERNA would be prepared to go. The Group, after some discussion, suggested only some minor changes.

It was noted that the amendment had to be signed before any SJ5 upgrade funding was disbursed, and later in the meeting UKERNA were promised a final response from the group by 1 July. All RNOs should voice any objections before then.

4 Report from the SLA negotiation team

Jason Bain said that there was nothing to report formally. Informally, it could be taken that the changes noted at the last meeting of the Group had been agreed [*see also Steve Percival's remarks below*].

5 Report from JDAG

Mike Byrne introduced this topic. He had circulated the notes produced by UKERNA of the meeting on 2 June, which all the Group's representatives agreed gave a very fair record. The next meetings would be on 16 September and 5 December.

As the minutes record, the Group's representatives (Mike Byrne, Ed Carter, Jason Bain) had strongly expressed their unhappiness about the rate of progress achieved by JDAG. A detailed discussion of the issues surrounding this ensued.

Henry Hughes had presented a draft work plan at the meeting, and undertaken to circulate a revised version, which was still awaited.

Group representatives had then made the following points to UKERNA:

- i. except where the work is of a purely investigative nature, new services should be considered for development only where there was clear evidence of real need for them;
- ii. cost-benefit of new services should be established before development was undertaken;
- iii. proposed developments should be "validated" by being sponsored by an RNO.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- the whole JANET development programme was to be reviewed at a JCN meeting in the autumn
- it should be noted that JCN funding for developments could flow directly to RNOs
- the recently-issued call for expressions of interest in QoS2 work had been commented on by JDAG and amendments suggested by them made
- when potential developments were considered it would be very useful to have a complete knowledge of the technical infrastructure of each RN
- plans for service developments would impact the process of an RNO procuring equipment and therefore must be made known as soon as possible
- the possibility of centrally-provided equipment which RNOs could use to carry out developments without interfering with their service equipment was again suggested

Mike Byrne summarised:

- UKERNA are listening to our input on developments
- We can influence the development plan
- UKERNA will publish a description of the overall development process
- UKERNA will organise workshops this year on optical networking and the delivery of the additional SJ5 channelised services via non-WDM infrastructures

6 UKERNA issues

6.1 SJ5 Progress

Dennis Russell reported.

The router procurement timetable had been brought forward.

The infrastructure OR was now on the SJ5 web site. Some of the six suppliers had said they wanted to visit at least some of the RNEPs. UKERNA had asked them to say which they wanted to see, before the end of June, and would then appreciate the co-operation of the RNOs in facilitating joint visits by suppliers, if requested, during July. He noted that the OR contained information relevant to the planning of the RNEP environment.

Twelve RNOs had expressed an interest in the possibility of RN links between the RNEPs being offered by SJ5 infrastructure suppliers, and this appeared as an option in the OR.

UKERNA will provide funding for equipment changes needed by RNs to enable them to accept 2.4 or 10Gbps PoS feeds (each RN's speed is listed in the OR). A lightweight bidding process for funds would be launched in July with responses required by the beginning of September. Allocation would *not* be formula based. Funds would probably flow through the BAP, would cover both capital and recurrent costs, and should be spent before April 2006. It was recognised that some RNs would have to be treated as special cases (for example, where there was an awkward coincidence between this initiative and re-procurement).

The infrastructure procurement identified some particular problems that may require exceptional approaches to resolve. For example, co-operation with other RENO in Ireland to connect Northern Ireland.

6.2 RPAN-related matters

Steve Percival reported.

Tim Kidd would produce the (delayed) minutes of the last meeting of the SJ5 contract clause negotiations.

The "final" version of the SJ5 funding amendment had been produced the previous week in the hope that it would be agreed and enable the release of funds to any RNO with an approved SJ5 upgrade plan in place. The Group informed him that there were

a (small) number of remaining points (7.17 was mentioned) and undertook to give UKERNA our final response by the end of the week.

Steve Percival noted that the cycle of RPAN contractual renewal meant that re-negotiation would have to re-commence early in 2006 in order that a contract should be in place to follow on from the current contract in 2007. The Group raised the possibility of consolidating the several RPAN-related negotiations in some way, but Steve Percival felt that although convenient this would not meet the requirements for new contractual arrangements to be in place when needed.

6.3 SJ4 service to FEs

Steve Percival reported that the money for the remaining FE upgrades had been released by the LSC, and those which had been on hold could now proceed. He thanked the English RNOs for their co-operation in carrying out this project.

Steve Percival informed the meeting that following the reduction of the LSC's contribution to the JISC, which had resulted in their becoming an associate partner only, English FEIs would now have access to a reduced portfolio of JISC services. The UKERNA budget would as a result be reduced, and this would be reflected in (minor) reductions in payments to the RNOs, probably by a lower transit bandwidth allowance for delivery of service to some FEIs. The changes would take effect in the 2005/06 RPAN contract year, but guidance on them would be available earlier

6.4 General service issues

Steve Percival reminded RNOs of the need to update the JANET operations staff of the status of any fault that had lasted for more than four hours.

6.5 SLA

Steve Percival reported on the negotiations with the JISC of 2005/06 SLA. UKERNA had suggested a text to cover the issue of sites with multiple connections, and JISC were considering this. The measurement of latency had been left un-addressed.

All SLA availability targets under the current SLA had been met for this calendar year, and he thanked RNOs for their contributions to achieving this.

7 Liaison with Chairs of MANs group

Ian Griffiths reported that this group planned to meet before the end of the year and would discuss:

- the future of the RNOs, particularly in the light of the suggestion that there should be fewer of them;
- the outcomes of the UKERNA audits of the RNOs, which had now mostly been carried out;
- the status of FEIs in MAN companies following the LSC's changed status in JISC;
- MAN funding.

8 Liaison with UCNG

John Linn reported.

Two workshops on resilience were being organised: on servers, in September; on networks in November.

The security toolkit had been made available.

A cabling procurement advice document had been issued.

He was concerned that the UCNG mailing list was moribund, with no active discussion of any issue.

9 Dates of future meetings

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 25 October 2005 in London (Mike Byrne will check the availability of accommodation). The following meeting will be on Wednesday 25 January 2006 in London.

10 Any other business

George Howat raised the matter of UKLIGHT connections. His concerns included:

- The arrival of the UKLIGHT equipment on site at Edinburgh at short notice
- No information being given on to whom the service was to be delivered, where, and how
- No guidance on the management of the equipment and the overall service to the end users

Ed Carter said that this might not be typical. The White Rose bid for UKLIGHT connection had been made in consultation with YHMAN.

Steve Percival asked George Howat to let him have a statement of his concerns so that he could take the matter up within UKERNA.

Phil Brady will be retiring in July so will be leaving UK MMG. He was thanked for his work on the Group, which wished him a happy retirement. The group also wished Linda McCormick a happy retirement.

The Group re-iterated its thanks to Mick Kahn, having recently left LMN, for all his work over the years and to this Steve Percival added thanks on behalf of UKERNA.

Jem Taylor and UHI were thanked for hosting the meeting.