

Background

1. JANET(UK)'s stated mission is to support UK competitiveness and learning by delivering information and communication technology services to enable research and education.
2. The continued positioning of JANET as a leading-edge network supporting the whole of the UK's education and research community remains a critical need to all JANET user sectors. This applies whether in support of the UK's world-class research base or of best practice in the application of ICT to education in a wide range of situations.
3. Feedback from JANET(UK)'s customers consistently indicates that they value and rely on the high levels of performance, reliability and support that JANET delivers. They also wish to see timely development of existing services and an expansion of the range of services to meet their future needs. They ask that JANET(UK) is flexible and responsive in meeting these future requirements, so that leading-edge services continue to be delivered seamlessly across the whole of the UK.
4. At the same time, JANET(UK)'s funders increasingly look to it to continue to deliver, and find ways to improve, value for money. In the current economic climate it is prudent to expect severe, possibly unprecedented, pressure on public funding in the coming years. Although JANET is widely regarded as an essential part of the UK's education and research infrastructure, there is already pressure on the JANET budget. This comes at a time when JANET is expanding, both in the number of users it serves and levels and range of use.
5. Against this background, JANET(UK) has recently completed its latest, internal review of its mechanisms for delivery of individual connections, a process it conducts every three to four years, and last undertaken in 2006.

Review of Regional Delivery

6. At the present time regional delivery accounts for over £20 million per annum or 40% of the JANET recurrent budget. The vast majority of individual connections are provisioned via a regional network. The arrangements vary from region to region across the UK, but over 600 connections (approximately 75% of the total) are delivered via a set of fourteen regional networks formed by consortia of universities and colleges. Three regional networks, two of which were formerly operated by such consortia, are now by agreement run by JANET(UK) itself.
7. Except where JANET(UK) operates a regional network itself or other arrangements apply (such as in Wales), engagement with such regional networks is via a contract between JANET(UK) and the operator of the regional network. This is currently known as the JANET Partner Agreement (“**JPA**”) and has been running in various forms for nearly a decade. Through the JPA the regional network operator provides JANET(UK) with the services it needs to deliver each JANET connection within that region. The network operators are part of the JANET supply chain to individual connected organisations.
8. This review, carried out by JANET(UK), has concentrated upon structural aspects of the regional delivery model and not the performance of the operators of the regional networks. Service levels delivered by the operators regularly meet or exceed those specified in the JPA. This review has instead considered the implications of future needs as outlined above, and the changes that might need to be made to the JANET regional delivery model as a consequence.
9. While there are regional variations JANET(UK) finds that there are underlying structural inefficiencies embodied in the JPA model that work against the need for improved flexibility, responsiveness, consistency of service provision and value for money in JANET regional delivery.

This leads to:

- i) an extended delivery chain (from working through a third party),
- ii) sub-optimal procurement (as a result of disaggregation) and
- iii) duplicated management of supply contracts (due to the additional layer of contract management inherent in the JPA model.)

In particular it hinders the maintenance of a coherent technical architecture for JANET as a whole. Finally, there are increasing regulatory risks associated with the JPA framework as currently implemented and these need to be addressed.

10. JANET(UK) has as a result concluded that the JPA model, in its current form, cannot continue to provide the necessary increases in efficiency and responsiveness in delivering JANET going forward. Therefore JANET(UK) will over time move regional delivery of JANET away from the JPA model and towards a more direct delivery model operated by JANET(UK) itself, with outsourcing as and when required to complement its own resources.

Consultation

11. This has been an internal review and addressing the structural issues outlined above will inevitably require significant change to regional delivery models. JANET(UK) will now embark on a programme of consultation, both with those individual customer organisations potentially affected and with individual regional network operators, to determine the optimal means of implementing this change.

12. Regional network operators may offer additional services (other than JANET connectivity) to their connected organisations and in some cases to the wider community. JANET(UK) will consult individually with connected organisations to understand their views as to what additional services they value and would wish JANET(UK) to consider when further developing its strategy in this area.

13. JANET(UK) will also consult regional network operators individually, with a view to agreeing in each case an outline strategy and associated timescales for making any changes relevant to delivery of JANET services within that region.

14. JANET(UK) will complete these consultations by mid-autumn.

Implementation

15. In carrying out any subsequent implementation, JANET(UK) will adopt the following five general guidelines.

- i. It will manage change so as to maintain continuity of JANET services delivery within each region.
- ii. It will continue to provide where required – and subject to the necessary funding being available – additional connectivity above the single JANET connection provided under JISC funding, along with other operational services offered by the regional network operator where it is operationally and economically viable to do so.
- iii. It will, to the extent possible, seek to preserve the collateral benefits of regional delivery, such as the informal advice and assistance that a number of operators of regional networks provide to organisations within their catchment areas.
- iv. It will establish mechanisms to ensure that users of JANET have, at the organisational level appropriate means of articulating their strategic requirements, and in this way contributing to the formulation of future JANET policy, products and services and their implementation.
- v. It will manage change so that the regional network consortia do not incur unfunded liabilities where these have reasonably accrued as a result of carrying out their obligations within the term of the JPA.