

23 October 2009

## **Re: Regional Delivery of JANET Services**

Following Tim Marshall's letter of 14 July, I write to provide an update on the process of consultation with Regional Network Operators (RNOs) and organisations connected to JANET through a regional network presently managed under the JANET Partner Agreement.

Following the JANET(UK) board decision to move over a number of years to a more direct delivery model there has been significant progress. We have held discussions with each of the RNOs involved and received sixty written responses to the request for comments on the proposed changes to the JANET regional delivery model. These responses have come from institutions, RNO and user groups. There have also been a number of useful informal comments and discussions with sector groups and with individuals. These discussions and responses have been very helpful in identifying both the opportunities and the challenges that will be encountered. We would like to record JANET(UK)'s appreciation of the professional and constructive manner in which these consultations have been held.

### **Summary of Consultations**

The responses received have focussed principally on two aspects: the process of communication of the decision to make changes to the means of delivery of JANET services; and the possible consequences of such changes being made.

With respect to process, some respondents felt that there should have been consultation with RNOs and with institutions before the JANET(UK) board considered the outcome of the review. A number of respondents feel also that the reasoning behind the recommendation should be made public, so that they may assure themselves that the case for change is properly made.

We recognise that there have been some aspects of our communications to date that have justifiably given rise to concern and we have taken steps to improve this process as we go forward. Regarding concerns about the consultation process, we do not share the view that it would have been beneficial to consult institutions and RNOs when conducting our initial assessment. This exercise was to analyse the fitness of the current arrangements for future operational purpose in meeting the JANET IP service obligations. These are placed on us by the funders through our service level agreement with the JISC. Clearly JANET(UK) must at all times carry out these obligations as cost-effectively as possible, particularly in the challenging funding environment.

Once we had made that initial assessment it was possible to start an open dialogue with individual RNOs as to how this imperative can most appropriately be maintained. We will now discuss with each RNO how the specific objectives outlined in July can best be achieved on a regional basis. As part of this we will publish details of the options appraisal at the heart of the review, in order that there can be a better understanding of how we believe the operational model must now evolve.

With respect to possible consequences of change, respondents raised concerns broadly in four areas:

- **Quality of service:** concern that the high quality of JANET service delivery would not be maintained without the local support, expertise and customer focus currently delivered through the RNOs.
- **Range of services:** concern that the range of services provided by RNOs in addition to those set out in the JANET Service Description might be discontinued or become uneconomic as a result of the changes. The provision of additional connectivity to institutions, for resilience or other purposes, was highlighted in particular. Also highlighted were potential threats to institution's activities in business and community engagement and the development of shared services.
- **Cost of services:** concern that the cost to institutions of services currently provided by a RNO may rise as a result of the changes. Suggestions also that if cost savings are achieved these should be reflected at least in part in costs to institutions, for example via the JANET network charge to HEIs.
- **Regional collaboration:** concern that the changes will result in the loss of an important forum for regional collaboration and influence, both within the regional tertiary education sector and in engagement with other initiatives within the region.

Naturally we recognise these areas of concern, and believe that the changes we see as necessary to the delivery model need not imply a reduction in service quality or range, or loss of a regional focus for service delivery. We remain convinced that regional delivery of JANET services remains the right model going forward. However, it will be necessary for all parties to recognise that for these to be preserved greater funding transparency will be required, alongside more efficient contract management and procurement processes. We are heartened to observe mutual recognition of this in many of the conversations we have had with RNO boards and staff.

#### Next Steps

We are now in the process of detailed consideration of the above responses, and of how best to implement the changes to services delivery recommended by the review, whilst preserving the collateral benefits of the existing delivery model. It is clear to us that achieving this will require different approaches in different regions, and also that it can only be achieved with the continued engagement of all concerned in the delivery chain.

To this end we will be holding further discussions with individual RNOs. We have also in most cases already extended by one year (to end September 2012) the JANET Partner Agreement with each RNO. This is so that there is sufficient time to agree and implement orderly transitions which we envisage as taking place largely over the period 2011-2013.

To provide a focus for these further discussions we will publish in mid November a "white paper" setting out how we believe the regional delivery model should now evolve to achieve all the goals outlined above. The white paper will also include details of the options appraisal we undertook as part of our original review, and a consideration of the regulatory aspects of the evolution we envisage as a result of this consultation.

This thinking will also be presented at the JANET(UK) strategic briefing in London on 30 November, with the opportunity for questions and discussion. Details of this briefing, which is open to all and which will also be streamed on the web, are on the JANET web site at:

[http://www.ja.net/services/events/2009/strategic\\_briefing/index.html](http://www.ja.net/services/events/2009/strategic_briefing/index.html)



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