

IT IN PLANTS REPORT TO MHS BOARD

Overview

This paper provides the MHS Board with an update on the IT in Meat Plants Project (ITMP). The ITMP aims include addressing the low levels of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and hardware throughout the MHS and has four key deliverables, delivered via the MHS Portal:

- The Operations Manual
- The Finance Manual
- Electronic Timesheets
- Throughput forms

Funding of £2m was allocated in 2003/04 to deliver the IT in Meat Plant Project of which:

- **£1.5m** was spent immediately in **2003/04** on Hardware for the Plants and the York Data Centre and included the commissioning of the Data Centre.
- **£300k** was used the following financial year **2004/05** on training plant staff and development of the MHS Portal and the creation of the Single Information Repository.
- The remaining **£200k** was carried over into **2005/06** and has funded additional Plant hardware and system application development for further enhancement of timesheets and throughput forms.

This funding has been supplemented by the allocation of £300k of baseline capital in 2005/06 to enable the Wide Area Network infrastructure upgrade (see section 5.1)

To date the completion of the York Data Centre consisting of eighteen file servers enables 226 PC's in plants and 100 enhanced senior meat hygiene inspectors' laptops to connect to the MHS Portal, giving some 1300 plant staff electronic access to the four key deliverables.

The latest version of Online Timesheets and Throughput was released to all regional users week beginning 2 January 2006. Access to the old offline version of the timesheets was removed for all users week beginning 9 January 2006.

For 2006/07 onwards, work will be taken forward on developing integrated electronic information systems to enable the whole organisation to work in a more joined up way through the ability to share data internally and externally under the Governments Interoperability Framework. Single Information Repository (SIR) development will electronically interface with legacy systems such as Finance to realize the full potential for accurate data that has been entered once at source. This will ultimately reduce the administrative business burden both internally and externally.

IT IN PLANTS REPORT TO MHS BOARD

1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide the MHS Board with an update on the IT in Meat Plants Project (ITMP). It is important to understand the intrinsic nature of this project to the transformation of the MHS into a modern 'e' enabled organisation. This includes the ability to electronically share information internally and externally with data that has been captured accurately, and only once at source. Further it should be acknowledged that for any electronic information systems to deliver efficiency and effectiveness it must be built on solid foundations. All MHS infrastructure and IT development has been built to recognised Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry standards and has followed the Central Government 'e' Agenda. The IS/IT Strategy 2003 – 2006 'ICT a vision for the way forward' underpins the strategic business requirements of the MHS today, tomorrow and for the future, of which the IT in Meat Plants Project is an important part.

2. Background

Moving Ahead, the Deloitte & Touche Business Case, MHS IS/IT Strategy and the Office of Government Commerce IT in Meat Plants Gateway Reviews all recognised the need for the IT in Meat Plants project not just to deliver PC's to plants, but to create a real platform for business transformation. One of the main issues to be addressed at the outset of the ITMP was the low levels of ICT infrastructure, application systems and general hardware throughout the MHS. This meant that there had to be a number of parallel projects to ensure delivery of a modern fully integrated solution. These partner projects had to address many of the key business issues especially around communication, accuracy, duplication and the lack of ICT skills in general throughout the organisation.

The MHS IS/IT STRATEGY 2003 – 2006 'ICT a vision for the way forward' addressed seven key areas that formed the basis from which the ICT improvement action plan was developed. These were:

1. Strategy

To ensure the hardware and software infrastructure gave the MHS the ability to deliver a modern joined-up service.

2. Cost

To put in place effective ICT policies and procedures that would realise efficiency savings within all ICT projects.

3. Ownership

To create an environment that was 'User driven not IT lead', and sought to promote 'Best Practice' in all that we do.

4. Resources

To use Industry Standard tools and techniques to ensure resource commitments were understood and well managed for all ICT projects.

5. Training

To work towards creating an IT literate workforce that would be appropriately trained not only for the tasks they need to do but to create a well motivated workforce ready for their next career move.

6. e-Government

To enable modernisation and commitment to our own agenda which would take us forward to meet the government 2005 targets.

7. Knowledge sharing

To promote by delivering systems that were integrated and capable of delivering information that is timely, appropriate, and has the ability to be shared by all.

The ethos of 'enter once share many' has been used throughout the ITMP to enable the MHS to meet the requirements of the 'Modernising Government White Paper' which sets out electronic service delivery by 2005 should be based on the following principles:

- **Joined up** - in ways that make sense to the customer;
- **Accessible** - at times and places most convenient to the customer;
- **Delivered or supported electronically** - facilitating faster, more reliable and better value services;
- **Delivered jointly** – where appropriate, by local and regional partnerships and connected to a national infrastructure;
- **Delivered seamlessly** – so that customers should not be asked to provide the same information more than once and service providers are better able to identify, reach and meet the needs of the service users;
- **Open and accountable** – so that information will be freely and easily available. Complaints will be easy to make and responded to quickly and effectively.
- **Used by e-users** – through effective promotion of electronic service, information and access to technology including the internet.

The Modernising Government agenda demands that government departments and agencies undertake a major re-think as to how they deliver their services. The MHS has been addressing this under the 'Knowledge through Sharing' programme of the overall ICT Strategy of which the IT in Meat Plants Project is an element.

3. Current Position

The bullet points listed below gives just the highlights of what has been accomplished over the last six months. One of the main benefits is the actual number of staff who are now confident enough to key their timesheets in on a regular basis thus getting regular practice in using a keyboard and a computer. This will benefit the organisation as a whole as we move forward to developing a more modern approach to business information and IT enablement

The ITMP had four key deliverables namely the Operations Manual, the Finance Manual and electronic Timesheets and Through-put forms all of which have now been delivered via the MHS Portal. The Portal is a communications tool with the ability to deliver at the touch of a button key messages to staff no matter what their location. This now holds a significant amount of MHS business news and is underpinned by 'e' training material that is focused on ensuring staff have what they need when they need it.

Key highlights over the last six months;

- weekly checkpoint meetings with IT and the business to monitor and ensure the ITMP continues to deliver what the business requires
- weekly contract monitoring teleconference with our strategic partners PC World Business (PCWB) & World Class International (WCI)
- development of electronic interfaces to ensure end to end process functionality
- workshops facilitated by IT to enable creation by users of User Acceptance Test Scripts to ensure users can check that functional development meets their business requirements
- development of additional online only functionality
- rolling asset audits linked to IT Service Desk
- installation/implementation and development tasks completed and handed over from project manager to Service Desk for ongoing support as business as usual
- change control and incident management reviewed by MHS and WCI enabling MHS and WCI service desks to ensure escalation management
- completion of initial one day ITM Awareness Training for all plant staff
- creation of a complete Development Life Cycle process and procedures built within an industry recognised structured framework
- monitoring individual use of timesheets and throughput forms and feeding back to staff via the IT in Meat Plants Newsletter

- production of the IT in Meat Plants newsletter to staff delivered as requested by staff in both paper and electronic format on the Portal
- investigation and piloting of new methods to improve plant connectivity and performance of equipment prior to producing cost benefit analysis and recommendations report
- held visioning sessions with strategic partners to ensure future proofing of ICT Infrastructure to deliver future business requirements using innovative technologies to deliver added value cost effective solutions
- begun planning Extranet development requirements. Held information gathering sessions with contract vets

All of the work completed to date has been to ensure the smooth transition from 'test to live'. To improve communication during this period an IT in Plants Working Group (ITMPWG) has been formed and will continue to be lead by a Regional Business Manager with representatives from each regional office, a number of plants, IT and other Headquarters departments.

Capital Costs

Funding of £2m was allocated in 2003/04 to deliver the IT in Meat Plant Project. The invitation for tender resulted in the contract being awarded to PC World Business (PCWB) and their strategic partners World Class International (WCI) and was signed by Chris Lawson on 12/03/2004.

£1.5m was spent immediately in **2003/04** on Hardware for the Plants and the York Data Centre and included the commissioning of the Data Centre.

£300k was used the following financial year **2004/05** on training plant staff and development of the MHS Portal and the creation of the Single Information Repository.

The remaining **£200k** was carried over into **2005/06** and has funded additional Plant hardware and system application development for further enhancement of timesheets and throughput forms.

This funding has been supplemented by the allocation of £300k of baseline capital in 2005/06 to enable the Wide Area Network infrastructure upgrade - see 5.1 below.

4. Current Issues

As with any large IT projects that are underpinning business transformation and change it is an iterative process and issues continue to be raised even after the key deliverables have been achieved on both the ICT and business front. A new version of the timesheet forms with technical and functionality improvements will be implemented before the 31 December 2005 and it is this version that all plant staff will use in the 'live' environment from 2 January 2006. Additional improvements to address current issues that will also 'go live' from 2 January 2006 include;

- **Single Plant Log-on:** the connection to the Datacentre will remain in place after the initial log-on, allowing users to enter their timesheets and throughput information by logging in and out of the Portal only. This will considerably speed up the whole process for staff in plants.
- **User Guides and Quick Reference Guides:** The ITMPWG has put together business process maps and new comprehensive timesheet and throughput user guides for plant-based staff, authorizing managers and regional offices. These will be available on the MHS Portal and laminated quick guides will be issued to all plants holding IT equipment
- **Remote Desktop:** Helpdesk Operators will be able to remotely take control of every plant computer in order to help them identify problems and speed up the rectification of issues and problems raised on the Help Desk by plant staff.

One of the key complaints from plant staff using IT equipment in plants is the speed of connectivity onto the Network and the Portal. To resolve this issue, a number of visioning days have been held with MHS IT staff and various strategic partners. The culmination of these days has resulted in a number of linked projects as described above. MHS staff, PCWB, WCI, NPL (Network Partners Limited), Tiscali and Independent consultants SAVISO are currently aiming to deliver improved connection speed on or before 31st December 2005. These projects will improve the Data Centre's performance and its ability to enable the staff in plant to connect to it more efficiently.

5. Future Linked Projects

5.1 Connectivity

The recent connectivity work needs to be further underpinned by moving away from the current method of network connectivity via BT to a newer faster more efficient technology called MPLS (Multiple Protocol Label Switching). This will be supplied by Tiscali via our current PCWB contract. MPLS is slightly less expensive to run than the current BT offering but the greatest benefit to the MHS is that it will also enable us to give ADSL (Broadband) to more of our current plant sites immediately. The aim of the MPLS project is to improve and overhaul the MHS current infrastructure to permit multiple access channels. This will enable users to connect into the MHS using the best available technology for the location they choose to work from. MPLS will also enable us improve service delivery to plants in the following way;

- the Tiscali MPLS broadband will give an improved performance to current plants that currently have broadband
- of the 128 sites that are currently ISDN, 110 can move immediately to broadband

- of the 9 PSTN sites, 5 can move immediately to broadband

Tiscali will continue working on the connectivity issues for the remaining 18 ISDN and four PSTN sites and upgrade them to broadband as soon as the geography allows the technology. The MPLS solution will enable up to four devices to intelligently connect simultaneously at each site. This means that the Plant PC, the SMHI laptop, and the Contract Vet can all connect to the MHS Portal simultaneously from any Plant with connectivity. The additional management information the MPLS project will deliver will enable the MHS to truly understand the technology usage at individual plant level which will assist both the business and IT in the future as we move towards full 'e' enablement.

5.2 Extranet development

Two information update sessions have been held by IT with eight contract holders represented by 15 members of their staff. This has enabled further development of the Extranet which has been delivered by Saviso as a by product of the Blueprint (Operational Resource Planning) work. This has also delivered the Software Development Framework which will enable RAD (rapid application development) enabling 'e' enabled data into the SIR (Single Information Repository). The Extranet is currently going through rigorous testing by IT. Although the delivery of the Extranet is not included in the ITMP it is an intrinsic part of 'e' enabling contract vets. The work currently being undertaken with PCWB/WCI and Saviso in addressing plant connectivity has enabled delivery of the initial phase of the Extranet. This will involve Contract Vets in a pilot the New Year and will help the delivery of the H123 CCIR to farmers and their vets.

5.3 Migration from Legacy Systems to the SIR (Single Information Repository)

Work on a number of key outcomes that will integrate with the ITM project are continuing. This includes aspects of OMIS (Operational Management Information System) migration, Metadata, Blueprint, Enforcement (Visualfiles-case management) and the 'e' enabled hierarchy in the SIR. The latter will enable easy user searching on people and location which will be imperative for farmers and their vets. The Data Sharing capabilities of what the MHS has built will also have a positive impact on the FSA Burden Reduction and Simplification Plan.

5.4 Creating an IT Literate Workforce

Numbers of staff completing 'e' timesheets is monitored by IT working with Regional office staff. Work with IT, ITMPWG and the Regional Business Managers Forum is being taken forward for those staff currently not able to complete electronic forms. Additional training as well as assistance from external IT trainers will be provided to staff where needed.

The amount of 'e' enablement being planned for the future has also led to proposals to build a network of IT champions within plants and this has been recommended to the ITM Project board.

6. Conclusion

The continual alignment of the ICT Strategy to the Business Strategy is a critical ingredient for the continued success of IT usage in Meat Plants. To date the completion of the York Data Centre consisting of eighteen file servers enables 226 PC's in plants and 100 enhanced senior meat hygiene inspectors' laptops to connect to the MHS Portal, giving some 1300 plant staff electronic access to the four key deliverables i.e. the Operations Manual, the Finance Manual, the Timesheets and the Throughput forms. These four key deliverables have been accessible by all MHS staff during the installation and deployment phases of the ITM Project and all of these will be live as at the 31 of December 2005.

A one day IT awareness training was initially delivered to 1288 plant staff with ongoing catch up training being done as business as usual for any staff that were missed. 27 plant staff have been trained as trainers and together with IT staff delivered the one day IT awareness. They also provide ongoing peer training and support on the ground.

Hardware support is provided by the WCI Service Desk who take on average 896 telephone calls from plant staff per month with an average 251 incidents raised on their Service Desk. On average 60 of these incidents per month are passed to, and rectified by the MHS IT Service Desk. Closure of the IT in Meat Plants project will enable the whole service to undertake business as usual Benchmarking so that we can compare the services we provide with other organisations demonstrating we are providing a value for money service that is showing service delivery improvements year on year.

For 2006/07 onwards, work will be taken forward on developing integrated electronic information systems to enable the whole organisation to work in a more joined up way through the ability to share data internally and externally under the Governments Interoperability Framework. SIR development will electronically interface with legacy systems such as Finance to realize the full potential for accurate data that has been entered once at source. This will ultimately reduce the administrative business burden both internally and externally.