

Notes from the speeches made to delegates of the DPOC, 4 March

Mr John Suffolk, Chief Information Officer, Her Majesty's Government presentation

Implementation & Delivery of Information Assurance – Making It Happen



John commenced his speech to delegates by addressing a previous question on the issue of civil service training in information awareness. He advised there was an obligation to train every civil servant by October 2009. The package will be computer based and is available to “anybody who wants it”.

John then took the opportunity to thank the Richard Thomas who he advised had “been posing tough difficult questions” on why the Chief information Officer was sharing information etc.

John reflected on how the world has shifted in the last two years, highlighting advances in technology. He discussed social networking around the world telling delegates the social networking site Facebook doubles every six months and that technology is moving faster than we are.

John played delegates a short government video highlighting how information technology is saving time, improving accuracy and improving services. He talked about the major challenge to cultivate a climate conducive to change and the importance for government agencies to make the best use of all technologies available to them – helping to keep everyone in the loop.

John told delegates the United Kingdom Government’s information technology network operates in 144 countries at over 2000 sites serving over 315,000 users. He highlighted this point advising GCHQ has the largest local area network in Europe and has one of the largest wide area networks on earth.

John discussed information technology in the public sector.

In regard to education (England), John highlighted the increase in the use of information technology in schools and told delegates it was getting to the stage when there would soon be no paper on a pupils desk.

He talked about how the use of information technology had facilitated payments, pension forecasts and the collection of revenue both in the UK and around the world.

John used the analogies of ‘Mirror Signal Manoeuvre’, ‘Drink Driving’ and the ‘Green Cross Code’ to demonstrate the point that whilst we may know about these polices and procedures we do not always do anything about it. He then posed the question “What are we doing about it?”.

John talked about the ‘5 Strands of Focus:

- Awareness, Understanding, Education

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- Developing our Information Assurance Community
- Applying the Standards and Rules
- Monitoring Compliance and Learning; and
- Anticipating and Adapting to the Future Threat.

He talked about information awareness and told delegates “we know because of all the data we have lost”. He talked about education and that government are developing our assurance community, applying standards and rules. He talked about the Green Cross Code and the Drink Driving of Information Assurance and that “if you fail the test you loose the licence”.

John stressed that if a policy was in place it must be complied with – “you must do it – no bending the rules”. He talked about anticipating the threat to information security and that we should learn and move things around. He told delegates we can’t lock all technology down or it would have the effect of only being able to shop in one Tesco or bank in one bank.

John talked about governance telling delegates that 65% of government’s information technology is outsourced to the private sector. He stressed the need for good governance to be pushed out to the private sector and to their subcontractors, asking the question “do you know their policies” and stressing the need to “cover all the bases”.

John told delegates that parliament receives a report every year in respect of all government data security incidents that includes near misses.

In conclusion John told delegates that Government recognised the need for change and has set the challenge of driving to the best Information Assurance capability. The UK Public sector can make a huge impact by its actions and is the driving force behind Information Assurance. The Government’s approach is to make progress by real clarity of what is acceptable, simple governance, broad involvement and action. He told delegates that the Governments emerging action plan, requirements and governance re-positions Information Assurance to be a top agenda item for all public bodies.

The floor was opened up for questions.

A delegate fro the NHS in Scotland asked a question about privacy by design

John responded stressing the importance of building in clauses to supplier’s obligations and working with every supplier to make sure they fulfil their minimum requirements.