

UK MAN Managers Group

Notes of Meeting held on 25 October 2005 at HEFCE, London

Present:

Dave Vinograd (Convenor)	
Mike Byrne (Deputy Convenor)	LeNSE
Kit Powell (Secretary)	SWERN
Chris Cheney	“EastNet”
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
Andy Mason	SWERN
Jim Hendry	MidMAN
George Howat	EaStMAN
Ian Griffiths	EMMAN
David Stedham	North Wales MAN
Steve Percival	UKERNA (from item 9)
Denis Russell	UKERNA (from item 9)
Linda McCormick	ClydeNET
Roger Williams	WNL

Apologies were received from:

Barry Forde	C&NLMAN
Mark Jameson	C&NLMAN
Andy McCreath	AbMAN
Jem Taylor	UHI

1 Notes of previous meeting

1.1 Accuracy

There were no corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 June 2005.

1.2 UKERNA monitoring equipment re-start after power failure

Steve Percival reported, later in the meeting, that he had discussed this with NRG. They are aware of the issue, which is characteristic of the Sun servers used as Netsight platforms. The number of instances when the boxes were powered off other than as part of planned and managed power outages was small, and the effort required to make changes to cope with these was too large to justify taking any action to deal with them.

Steve Williams was also looking at this as part of the performance and measurement development project.

2 RPAN contract

Arising from a previous query about the non-appearance of the questionnaire on the costs of increased hours of cover, promised by Tim Kidd at the last RUSI meeting, Ed Carter reported that he had followed this up with Tim and had been told that the changes were not now envisaged as part of the SJ5 amendment to the current contract (RPAN2), and the questionnaire would therefore not be issued.

Ian Griffiths and Mike Byrne reported on the state of negotiations for the SJ5 amendment to RPAN2. Ian confirmed that UKERNA wished to concentrate on the contractual changes required to bring SJ5 into service, and would therefore not be pursuing increased cover in this round of negotiations. He pointed out that the negotiations for RPAN3, to come into force in October 2007 on termination of the existing contract, would have to start in January 2006 if they were to be complete, as required, by the end of September 2006. *This was discussed later in the UKERNA section of the agenda.*

Ian said that the rate of progress on the RPAN2 negotiations was slow, a meeting in June having been called off and the next not expected until late this year, 8 months since the previous one. He noted the possibility that UKERNA might raise strategic issues at the next Chairs of MANs meeting (30 November) affecting the relationship of MANs with UKERNA.

It was agreed that the Group currently had no RPAN changes that they wanted to see made. The Convenor asked members to bring any changes that they wanted made to the next meeting.

Action: all

Linda McCormick commented that RNOs' work in negotiating RPAN contracts was at the expense of other activities more directly related to their functions.

It was reported that those RNOs requiring SJ5 monies this year had signed the SJ5 project funding amendment in August.

2.1 Development effort funding

The amendment had now been signed by all MANs.

2.2 SJ5 Changes

As noted above progress had been slow, but these were expected to be agreed by the end of the year.

3 Report from the SLA negotiation team

Paul Kentish and Jason Bain had nothing to report.

It was noted that the UCISA-NG would discuss the JANET SLA at its meeting on 26 October. Discussions on the next round of changes would start in January. One issue that had yet to be satisfactorily addressed was the differentiation between circuit and access failures for sites with more than one link.

Paul pointed out that he was due to be replaced as one of the Group's representatives next year, and it was agreed to appoint his successor at the next meeting, and to identify any issues that the group wished to take into the SLA negotiations.

Action: all

4 Report from JDAG

Ed Carter and Mike Byrne reported.

The development process was now documented. The programme for the current year had been produced as well as the communications strategy, which would be circulated to the Group for comment.

Action: Ed Carter

Mike Byrne explained the concept of RN champions for developments. This was an idea put forward by the RNOs, and the concept was not yet fully mature. However, the purpose was to identify an RNO that was interested in the development and committed to implementing it when satisfactorily completed. The champion would identify any issues for RNOs arising from the development, and would not itself be responsible for the development work. John Linn added that the champion would act as a focus for all discussion of a development by the RN community. Mike noted that UKERNA were in the process of appointing someone to act as a focus for communications relating to the whole development programme.

The Group then discussed champions for developments currently in hand, with the following outcome:

Phase II QoS	Tim Robinson
IPv6	John Linn
Performance Measurement	David Hayling
Multicast beacon service upgrade	Roger Williams (<i>actually Chris Price</i>)
SJ5 bandwidth channel services	<i>To await project start</i>
Reliability	<i>To await project start</i>

Jim Hendry asked about progress on the organising by UKERNA of the two workshops for RNOs, on practical optical networking technology as it could be applied within Regional Area, and on the range of approaches (such as MPLS) possible to providing bandwidth channel services where there was no access to fibre infrastructure and WDM systems.

Action: secretary to enquire about progress

5 Liaison with Chairs of MANs Group

Ian Griffiths had previously drawn the Group's attention to a UKERNA item for the 30 November meeting "Regional Network Strategic Changes".

Possible implications of this were discussed at some length. Some points made included:

- The Group would not be directly involved in negotiations about any changes to the relationships between RNs and UKERNA, which would be the role of the Chairs of MANs
- In regional terms, UKERNA also deals with 10 RBCs
- There are UK regional differences: Wales, for example, is contemplating a single broadband network to serve all public services, including education, in the principality
- The Chair of an RN could send a representative to Chairs of MANs meetings

6 UCISA-NG

John Linn pointed out that he was no longer a member of the NG (although he would be giving a presentation at the Highly Available Networks event in November). Tim Robinson would be acting as the liaison between NG and the Group in future. It was noted that UCISA-NG minutes were public and accessible to all.

7 Dates of future meetings

Wednesday 25 January 2006, HEFCE London (SWERN to pay for catering)

Thursday 27 April 2006, HEFCE London (EMMAN to pay for catering)

It was agreed to continue with the current practice of holding the summer meeting outside London, possibly at a venue with video-conferencing facilities.

8 Other business

8.1 JCP and wholly-owned companies

Joe Burns asked for the Group's comments on a situation that had arisen at QUB: a technology transfer company, wholly owned by the University, had moved to premises on-campus, in fact in the same building as the University's network hub. University senior management had questioned the requirement that the company have a Sponsored Connection Licence, as required by the JCP (when last sighted – it was pointed out that it was no longer on line, and was said to be being revised).

The consensus was that, while sympathising with anyone who found themselves having to reconcile the conflicting requirements of local management and the JCP, no-one was aware of the Policy's requirements being relaxed, either formally or otherwise, in similar circumstances. It was noted, however, that where integral parts of a university (the Law faculty in one case) had been set up as separate legal entities their connection to the institution's main network had been allowed. Also, that the Proxy Licence scheme could be used for small groups not requiring connection of non-university computers to JANET.

8.2 RNO information exchange

Ed Carter regretted the loss of the useful exchange of information about each RN's plans and problems that used to occur at the end of each meeting of the Group. It was

agreed to resume this in future by asking for contributions in advance of meetings to be circulated with the calling notice.

Action: all, secretary

9 UKERNA reports and issues

9.1 SJ5 procurement

Denis Russell said that the preferred supplier had been selected and the choice was in the process of gaining the requisite approvals. He hoped that the name would be made public the end of October, when contract negotiations would begin.

9.2 RNEP interfaces to SJ5 backbone

Denis Russell said that all RNOs had submitted their applications for funding on time, and these had been considered by the panel and decisions reached. RNOs should be informed of their awards soon.

There had been several applications for funding for upgrades of Cisco 6500 and 7600 supervisors from SupII to Sup720. UKERNA had researched this and had taken technical advice; the conclusion was that no RNO had a requirement for a supervisor upgrade of this sort as part of the provision of connectivity to the SJ5 backbone feed, and none would be funded from this initiative.

It was noted that of the three versions of Sup720 the “A” version did not support MPLS in hardware. George Howat also advised thorough investigation of the whole configuration of a Cisco 6500 or 7600 before upgrading to Sup720, as there were interactions between it and other modules that could reduce the Sup720’s capabilities in service.

Denis reported that several RNOs had enquired whether UKERNA would be prepared to buy Cisco 2.5Gbps PoS interfaces as a single order on behalf of the RNOs, with possible savings in money and delivery times. UKERNA were willing to do this and subsequently transfer ownership to the RNOs, but could not meet any additional costs for installation that might be incurred by the RNO in adding the new interface to its maintained equipment when it had not been installed at time of purchase. RNOs would have to express their firm interest in UKERNA buying interfaces on their behalf without delay.

John Linn asked whether RNs would need to support MPLS for delivery of bandwidth services from the SJ5 backbone. It was stated that there was no plan to use MPLS: the service would be carried over SDH, separately from the production IP service, and presented at the RNEP on Gigabit Ethernet interfaces (though not necessarily at 1000Mbps).

9.3 Possible increase in covered hours

Confirming what had already been reported by Ian Griffiths, it was stated that UKERNA had decided that the priority was the introduction of SJ5 within the current service profile and that they would therefore not be looking at the issue of increasing hours of cover as part of the SJ5 amendment to RPAN2. The issue would be addressed in RPAN3.

9.4 SJ5 contract issues

Steve Percival expected the amendment to deal with:

- The provision of the second RNEP
- Minor changes to the reporting of outages
- Delivery of the new SJ5 services

UKERNA funding from JISC for the 06-07 year was to be increased by less than had been planned for.

The LSC and the JISC were still negotiating the new status and funding level for FE JANET services. Steve said that as this was an English issue there was no reason to expect that this would have any effect on the sector in other parts of the UK.

Steve reported that UKERNA were considering the desirability of extending the term of the current RPAN2 contract beyond its current termination at the end of September 2007. The Group noted in passing that the alignment of the RPAN contract with SJ upgrades was desirable, and Steve said that he would take this suggestion forward. Moving the RPAN commencement date to align with another cycle (e.g. the 1 August academic year) was mooted, but the views of members of the Group differed on the desirability of this.

9.5 LSC/FE upgrades

335 of 388 in the current round were complete; Steve Percival said that the programme has gone very well.

Connection of about 25 ACL centres was complete, with about another 50 in hand. Further connections would not be initiated until April 2006.

Connection of 11 WEA regional offices was now in hand.

9.6 UKERNA-NHS

UKERNA had nothing to report.

Tim Robinson, who represents the MANs on the national body considering the N3-JANET gateway (whose next meeting will be 17 November), reported that this body had representation from all parties at the highest level and was making progress. The concept was no longer a gateway in the traditional sense of a network interconnect but rather a set of encrypted VPNs used across JANET and N3 to connect users to various NHS IT resources, such as centralised patient record systems. The working party is looking at a 'bi-directional gateway', and will be developing solutions for both HE to NHS and NHS to HE.

Access to resources within trusts would be addressed along the lines of the model produced by Andrew Cormack and successfully trialled at Cambridge. Members of the group expressed some concern that there were some classes of user whose need were not being addressed, such as researchers - joint Trust/Academic or either - who needed access to systems which may fall out of the Citrix/VPN proxying model.

9.7 JANET and schools

Replying to a query from Ed Carter whether UKERNA still considered the RBC model the correct model for connecting schools, Steve Percival said that UKERNA's position had not changed, and he did not expect that SJ5 would affect this position for the time being.

Ian Griffiths reported that discussions between EMMAN and the local RBC on its using the MAN as a backbone had fallen through.

9.8 Fibre rating

Denis Russell summarised the salient points from a paper commissioned by UKERNA, which he hoped to circulate once permission was given.

Arising from this:

- It was pointed out that it could be advantageous for the rates to be paid by an institution (e.g. HE) enjoying a high level of rate relief
- The Group noted that MANs are generally not charities, and therefore will not receive relief
- The Group queried what the position would be for fibre used exclusively (the criterion for it being subject to payment of rates by the user) but actually lit by a telco (e.g. a LES circuit)
- MANCos should consider whether to include the potential liability to pay rates on fibre in their financial reports

9.9 Other UKERNA business

9.9.1 Special Purpose Bandwidth

Steve had discussed the issues raised by George Howat in the UKLight context with Jeremy Sharp and David Salmon, and a response covering the current service, which he summarised, would be made by mail.

In the longer term, this issue would be covered by the SJ5 RPAN2 amendment.

9.9.2 Netsight platform re-start after power-off

Minuted at 1.2 above.

9.9.3 Possible extension of RPAN2 contract term

Mike Byrne pointed out that this could be a significant problem for RNOs whose re-procurement cycle had been expected to result in their new services coming on stream at the same time as the RPAN3 contract came into force. Technical and contractual constraints militated against prolonging the current service beyond its current end date, but the procurement would have to be against an RPAN3 requirement that hadn't been defined.

9.9.4 Future of RSCs

Mike Byrne asked if there was any information about the future of RSCs. Steve Percival said that while UKERNA had no general criticism of the RSCs it was felt that configuration and support of the B-end routers should be done by a body with which they, UKERNA, had a contract. He also noted that the RSC contract ran to 2007, and that the arrangement was under review.

9.9.5 Notification of JANET site works

RNOs have experienced problems with JANET customers who carry out unannounced work that takes their connection to the MAN out of service, resulting in extra work for MAN staff in investigating apparent faults. It was suggested that UKERNA should apply some pressure on their customers to notify RNOs of works of this sort.

9.9.6 NOSC monitoring

Tim Robinson, using as an example an incident in which JANET service to 17 colleges had been lost out of hour as the result of an internal MAN circuit failure, queried the NOSC's not monitoring serviceability beyond the BAR. In this case Netsight was clearly indicating the fault, but the NOSC were not monitoring it.

9.9.7 SJ5 RNEP utilisation

Ian Griffiths reported that contrary to what the RNOs had been told, and had planned for, UKERNA now expected that SJ5 IP service traffic could flow through both RNEPs on normal operation, and not through one only with the other used solely as a backup route in case of faults.

It was pointed out that RNOs had made their plans on the previous assumption, sometimes resulting in higher costs. It was also noted that routing configuration was more complex in the new arrangement.

The Group felt strongly that when UKERNA changes a policy it should communicate the change in a timely manner.

10 Reports from RNs

The following reports were received from RNs.

10.1 *MidMAN*

Regional Network Procurement

- The West Midlands Networking Company Ltd (WMNC Ltd) procurement of the regional network is underway.
- This is not strictly the procurement of the MidMAN replacement, but assuming a favourable outcome from the regional procurement then the replacement MidMAN service may utilise it.
- MidMAN retains the right of an alternative approach viz. to conduct its own separate procurement should this need arise.
- MidMAN has constructed its own set of requirements for its replacement (and these inter-alia contain the necessary SuperJANET5 features).
- MidMAN has assisted WMNC Ltd in constructing the WMNC Ltd tender

documents (in particular the Invitation to Negotiate) and these of course reflect the MidMAN requirements.

- The interesting phase is about to commence with suppliers responses due to be returned on 31 October. MidMAN is involved in their evaluation.

LSC FE Upgrade Programme

- Within MidMAN, for the 38 Colleges involved this is essentially complete, save for a single College where an asbestos related issue is delaying installation.

Disaster Recovery Planning

- MidMAN is hosting a Disaster Recovery Planning event for its HEIs to facilitate discussion on collaborative approaches in this area of HEI activity.

J A Hendry

Director of Special Projects / MidMAN Co-ordinator

10.2 WNL

WELSH NETWORKING LIMITED (running the SWMAN) The "rationalisation" of the number of MANs has started first in Wales. UKERNA have indicated that, in future, they wish to deal with a single RNO in Wales. Discussions are taking place between NWMAN, SWMAN and UKERNA to see how this can best be done given the high cost of linking the South and North.

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) have commissioned a consultant to advise them on how best to provide a single public sector network for all devolved bodies in the country. All levels of education, including FECs and HEIs are included in the consultant's remit. The report should be considered by the relevant minister in December. We may then know our fate!

The WAG already have a network (called LLNW) which we manage for them. It links all unitary authorities together and provides internet access via JANET. Discussions are taking place to see to what extent we can use the LLNW for both primary and backup use.

We continue to find that our microwave links show most breaks. Fortunately, we now have land-line backups for all of them and our SL1 & SL2 figures have significantly improved.

Roger A S Williams

Executive Officer WELSH NETWORKING LIMITED

10.3 NWMAN

Following Phil Brady's retirement Julie Snelson (UWB Director IT Services) is the MAN Executive Officer and acting Chair. David Stedham is MAN Manager.

We are continuing to have problems with an FE college link carried over radio. Cable & Wireless are working on a 34M upgrade, but this is proving difficult. A BT line

may be the only solution.

NWMAN's contract with C&W finishes at the end of December 2006. We are working on future use of the Lifelong Learning Network for Wales to carry MAN traffic between some sites and the MAN entry point. The two main tasks are to agree use of the connections with Welsh Assembly Government and discuss the technical aspects with Logicalis, who built the LLNW.

David Stedham

10.4 SWERN

We are in the process of installing five examples of what are effectively very long tail circuits, between sites in Devon and Cornwall and one of our RNEPs in Bristol. These connect the JANET sites to a telco's resilient SDH infrastructure, using either the telco's own fibre or BT WES, each circuit being presented to the SWERN PoP on an individual interface. The telco has a number of PoPs that will allow sites to connect to another of its PoPs to improve resilience against tail circuit and PoP failure, if desired.

This is an appealing arrangement in areas where sites are sparse and widely scattered but the telco has a good coverage, and we expect to deploy it elsewhere.

Kit Powell, Andy Mason.