

CAB 252/00

12 July 2000

ONE-THIRD OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES ARE NOW ONLINE, REVEALS MCCARTNEY

International E-government Study Highlights Britain as Emerging Nation

One-third of all Government services are now available online with the figure set to rise to nearly 75 per cent by 2002, announced Cabinet Office Minister Ian McCartney today.

A new progress report reveals that of 457 services delivered to business and citizens, 152 services are available online now and 326 services will be by 2002.

The figures coincide with new National Statistics figures which show over the first three months of 2000, an average of 6.5 million households in the UK (25 per cent) could access the internet from home computer. This is double the number in the first three months of 1999.

Cabinet Office Minister Ian McCartney said:

"This new report shows that we are making significant progress towards our goal of delivering all Government services online by 2005. There is still a great deal of work to be done, but the pace of change has been stepped up considerably in recent months.

"Of the services offered, most are currently information-based rather than transactional. But many more online services will be rolled out in coming months in areas such as health, jobs and to business. We will also launch our groundbreaking ukonline.gov.uk citizens portal later this year - a single electronic point of access, which will be able to offer a unique window on Government through a personalisable homepage."

Speaking at the E-Business Summit 2000, organised by the Alliance for Electronic Business, Government e-envoy Alex Allan also launched a new international E-Government Benchmarking study.

The international benchmarking report reveals keys lessons for Government as the agenda is driven forward and many more pioneering services are launched in the coming months. It examines E-Government in more than a dozen countries across the world.

Government e-envoy Alex Allan said:

"New international comparisons reveal Britain is an emerging E-Government nation. We are currently equivalent to champions of football's first division - behind the Manchester Uniteds from Scandinavia and the Southern hemisphere, but ahead of many others.

"But it shows we have the potential to push for the Premiership title in the future. We are putting the structures in place and have the high-level commitment needed to see us catapulted to the top in coming years."

Information Age Government, Benchmarking Electronic Service Delivery is a report comparing the UK against the G7 countries and beyond. It highlights many key lessons for the public sector drawn from examples of best practice across the world, including:

- Electronic service delivery raises expectations and technology needs to be fast and robust:
- Government should ensure a choice of electronic service delivery methods, but counter service should be preserved to ensure social inclusion.
- Projects should be piloted first to avoid problems and hitches which could undermine and shake public confidence in a service.
- Providing incentives can play an important part in attracting customers to use electronic services. For example, the UK has offered a discount of £10 if self-assessment tax returns are filed over the internet.
- Building on the success of others is key, such as adopting best practice from overseas.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Progress towards online service delivery targets are detailed at: www.citu.gov.uk/esd/esdreps.htm

2. The International benchmarking report is at: www.iagchampions.gov.uk/whatsnew.html

3. The Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet agreed a new target of offering all Government services online by 2005 in March, at a Special Information Age Cabinet meeting. A new, improved, monitoring regime was also introduced to measure progress towards the target. Services will be available online through personal computer, web-enabled call centre, or Digital TV. Routine telephone calls or faxes do not count towards meeting the target.

4. Government services currently online include:

· Companies House (online returns and searches); · NHS Direct; · Foreign Office advice for those travelling abroad; · Consumer advice; and · Comprehensive news service on the Number 10 website.

5. Other services to be available online include:

· Small Business Service, tailored advice based on company size, location and sector; · Employment Service job vacancies will be online by the autumn (and online kiosks will be sited in jobcentres); · Vehicle Excise Duty; and · VAT registration, declarations and other returns to HM Customs.

6. On 1 March, the Prime Minister made a commitment to ensure that everyone who wants it will have access to the Internet by 2005. Access will be in the home through a personal computer, Digital TV or games console, on the move through a mobile telephone, or at a nearby public access point. Current Government initiatives to increase individuals' access and skills include:

· All schools and libraries connected to the Internet by 2002; · 80% discounts on basic IT courses available from April; · Tax breaks for companies that loan computers to employees; · 100,000 poor families to lease or buy cheap refurbished computers; and · Over 700 IT access centres to be open by next year.

Issued By:

Cabinet Office Press Office 70 Whitehall LONDON SW1A 2AS