

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 19 SEPTEMBER 2001

DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGISTRATION SERVICE IN SCOTLAND

Report by the Director of Community Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the Council's response to the consultation paper from the Register General on the Digital Imaging of the Genealogical Records of Scotland's People (DIGROS) and the Forward Electronic Register (FER). The response is contained in Appendix 1.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) is keen to develop DIGROS and FER as one way of modernising and expanding its services. The GROS had previously considered and consulted on its paper "Civil Registration in the 21st Century" which developed and expanded a number of processes and services and a response was agreed by the Community Services Committee of 7th February 2001. DIGROS and FER develop the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) element of the Registration service. Both projects are expected to be fully in place by 2003.
- 2.1 The Local Office and Registration Manager, Senior Registrar and the Department's ICT Account Manager attended a seminar on DIGROS and FER, hosted by the GROS, which included representation from most Scottish Councils.

3 DIGROS

- 3.1 DIGROS will convert into digital imaging format all of the records that are held by GROS. These include all statutory records since 1855, The Old Parish Registers, the open Census Records (1841 to 1901), and other minor records.
- 3.2 The main benefit for the Council's Registration Service would be the viewing locally both an index of all of the records for Scotland as well as digital images of the register pages and open Census information covering all of Scotland. This would allow the enhancement of the Genealogy search facility and allow customers to search locally all of Scotland's records, bringing a search fee to the Council.
- 3.3 In due course, the Registration Service could be permitted to issue certified extracts of vital events using the DIGROS system regardless of where the vital event was originally registered.

- 3.4 While the new process could increase income generation there may be a reduction in demand for certified extracts by interested parties such as genealogists.

4 FER

- 4.1 FER will update and replace the current Scottish Registration Software (SRS) by the beginning of 2003 and be the new system of registration in Scotland. FER will facilitate the electronic transfer of registration data to GROS, which will replace the sending of diskettes. It will also apply authorised corrections to electronically registered events.

- 4.2 Where allowed FER can support the onward distribution of registration related information to relevant locations. eg Benefits Agency. The information could also be subject to a fee where appropriate.

5 GENEALOGY SERVICE

- 5.1 Clearly there would be a potential income stream from genealogy related requests but at the moment the information could not be extracted by genealogy staff, only Registrars. Since the genealogy staff work within the Library, Registration and Information Service it may be possible to allow them access to the information.

6 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

- 6.1 A summary of the options proposed for electronic connection to GROS are attached in Appendix 2.

- 6.2 ICT staff have advised that the Council should not consider GROS's preferred option offered by the GSX/LGSI connection, (Option 4 in Appendix 2), as it is not compatible with the Council's ICT Strategy and requirements. The only existing option that would be acceptable is Option 3.

- 6.3 ICT staff advise that additional options should be suggested to GROS, namely:

- (i) The development by GROS of a secure web based application which Councils could access over the Internet via existing Council connections to the Internet.
- (ii) The utilisation of the ex-Strathclyde Regional Council centre at Caird in Hamilton whereby the participating ex-SRC authorities would share costs associated with the installation of a communications line between Caird and GROS.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Associated costs of ICT installation and operation. The potential income stream from an expanded genealogy service.

8 LEGAL/ POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Nil

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The DIGROS and FER systems will offer improved levels of service to users, streamlining of processes and greater access to resources for Registrars.
- 9.2 The DIGROS system offers opportunity for greater local access to resources for genealogical and heritage research. There are potential benefits for library services if GROS offer access to non-registration staff.
- 9.3 The implementation of DIGROS and FER will offer the opportunity to develop closer working relationships between Registration and Heritage Services with potential benefit to tourism in East Ayrshire.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The committee is asked to endorse the response to the consultation documents outlined in Appendix 1

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

21 August 2001
WS/DMc

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Letter from the GROS "Development of the Registration Service in Scotland"

Anyone wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should contact John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services on 01563 576264.

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APPENDIX 1

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

**RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE REGISTRATION SERVICE IN SCOTLAND**

The Council welcomes any development that improves services to the public but must always seek to minimise additional costs that may be incurred.

The possibility of an income stream being developed through the genealogy service should assist in meeting costs. The Council feels it would be in its interest to allow genealogy staff to access records in addition to Registrars.

In relation to any electronic connection between the Council and GROS, the Council would not be in favour of the GROS's preferred option offered by the GSX/LGSI connection, as it is not compatible with the Council's ICT Strategy.

The only existing option the Council would find acceptable is Option 3 relating to the use of a leased line.

The Council suggest the development of other options, namely:

The development by GROS of a secure web based application which Councils could access over the Internet via existing Council connections to the Internet.

The utilisation of the ex-Strathclyde Regional Council centre at Caird in Hamilton whereby the participating authorities would share costs associated with the installation of a communications line between Caird and GROS.

The Council is concerned about the timescale for the consultation being at a holiday period when Council Committees are in recess and would urge the GROS to take this into consideration for future consultations.

Communications Options for Registration Access to GROS

1. There are 4 main options to connectivity to the GROS data server for Local Registration Offices throughout Scotland. These connection methods vary in cost, speed of access, number users required and geographic location.
2. GROS currently offer access to the Registration Service using dialup to a limited number of modern connected controllers that connect to the Registration Service Index server. This option is basic, does not provide east access, however, is cost effective for 1 or 2 users with infrequent need for information from GROS.
3. New options being offered by GROS for access to the Index system, Census Images and eventually the replacement SRS system, known as FER.

Option 1 – Secure Dial (hosted by cable & wireless)

4. This option is based on a dialup access where a modem is used from the local office to connect to a local call number (0845) and the call is then connected to a dedicated Network hosted by Secure Dial and linked to GROS.
5. The costs for this service are:

Local Office – Local call rate call 4.2p per minute
 Analogue BT or equivalent, line rental cost £39 per quarter.
 Cost of modem for PC workstation.

GROS Site Leased line to secure dial £3,000 approx.

6. Typical use of this service – Where there is only 1 or 2 workstations require limited access to GROS. This provides secure guaranteed access to the systems hosted by GROS.

Advantages

- Low cost outlay
- Ideal solution for low usage
- Available immediately
- Managed service by cable & Wireless

Disadvantages

- High cost of calls if used frequently
- Not suitable for more than 2 users of the service (least cost effective)
- Not always a reliable connection at local end, leads to slow responses

Option 1A PSTN Dialup

7. Same as option 1. However, secure dial is not used and the normal public telephone network is used. The costs are the same with the exception of the local call rate and the cost for GROS. GROS have the Remote Access Server equipment already. Each local office would pay the regional or national call rate dependant on their geographic location to GROS in Edinburgh. Advantages and disadvantages are also the same with the exception of security, this option has less security attached to it.

Option 2 – ISDN Line

8. This option would provide a fast dialup solution to GROS, Edinburgh. The size of the connection can vary from 64kb to 128kb. For the type of access required in the Registration Service alone, 64kb would be adequate. This option suits most remote offices that are not already network connected and or may want to connect one to multiple users from the same location.

9. **Local Office**

ISDN2 Line installation from Communications Company.

Terminal adapter or router for line to GROS.

If the local office has a network installed multiple users can share the access with a router.

Costs - Provide a ISDN2 line approximately £524 per annum dependent on location from Edinburgh plus £100 installation.
Standard call costs for duration of connection time to GROS.
Install router to link to line and GROS, various types available from £700 + installation and configuration or terminal adapter for 1 workstation costing approximately £50.

10. **GROS Site**

Equipment already installed and available.

Advantages

High availability

Ideal solution for multiple users on existing network or single user access

High speed access 64kb – 128kb

Connection spoofing, provides seamless connectivity to host and remote end without being connected while local work is undertaken

Disadvantages

Cost of calls

Router or terminal adapter required to be purchased & maintained

Monitoring required to see if connected for more than 4 hours per day to ensure value for money.

Option 3 – Leased Line

11. This option would provide a dedicated line to GROS to provide access with no call costs 24 hrs a day 7 days a week. The size of the connection can vary from 64kb upwards. For the type of access required in the Registration Service alone, 64kb would be adequate. This option suits most offices that already have a network installed or are connected to a larger network within the authority. The costs of this service vary dependant on the infrastructure that is already in place with the local office and the Authority.

12. **Local Office**

Leased line installation from communications company.

Router to link leased line to local office network.

Local office must have a network installed, or be connected to an existing one.

Costs - Provide a 64kb line approximately £3,000 per annum dependent on location from Edinburgh.

Install router to link to line and GROS, various types available from £700 + installation and configuration.

13. **GROS Site**

Provide router connection to local office, approximately £700.

Advantages

High availability

No call costs

Ideal solution for multiple users on existing network

Fast access

Disadvantages

Cost of line

Router required to be purchased and maintained

Not best solution for single site users, based on cost

Option 4 – GSX/LGSI Connection

14. This option would suit any local office whose Authority has already signed the GSX agreement between GSI and COSLA or are planning to in the foreseeable future. This connection would give local offices access via their own network to the GSX/LGSI and subsequently access to the GROS Registration service server.

15. GROS already have this infrastructure in place and are using the GSI currently. To allow the local offices access to this, the Authority must have signed an access agreement with LGSI.

Local Office

16. £10,895 pa rental for £256kb frame relay connection, with free installation. There are no call costs for this option. It should also be borne in mind that the Authority would most probably meet the cost of this option, as the connection would be used for other Authority services to Government.

GROS requirements for LGSI connection method

17. Require Cable & Wireless to set up a web front end to host the service between Registration and GROS, then route the traffic to GROS via the LGSI and GSI. The cost for this service is approximately £2,500 installation and £700 pa recurring hosting charge.

Advantages

- Strategic Local and National Government platform
- High availability
- Scaleable link size – starting at 256kb
- Partially funded, if not all, by authorities existing needs
- Managed network
- No call costs
- Special COSLA deal with no capital outlay

Disadvantages

- High annual cost of link if not partially funded by Authority
- Requires Network to Local Authority
- Not the best solution for single users

Summary

18. The GROS preferred communications option would be through the LGSI (Option 4). This would particularly suit networked multiple-user offices. However, we recognise that it may also be necessary to allow a different connection method for the low usage not network-connected user. We do not consider Secure dial in option 1 suitable to this, and Leased lines (option 3) is more suitable to offices that already have a network. ISDN (Option 2) would appear to us to be the most favourable solution for low usage and single user connections. Existing GROS Remote Access Server (RAS) equipment could be partially redeployed to accommodate this.

AGENDA

APPENDIX 2