



CabinetOffice

Symposium for Telecommunications Sub Group Chairs

26–27 October, 2011

Report on Feedback

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INTRODUCTION

On 26 and 27 October 2011 at the National Policing Improvement Agency site in Ryton, Coventry, over 100 delegates from the public sector, central government and the communications industry came together to review what was going on currently in the world of communications emergency resilience, what the emerging challenges were, and how these could be met, particularly by the local TSGs.

Since the formation of the TSGs, Cabinet Office has been holding annual national events for Chairs and Members constructed around the latest position of the Resilience Telecommunications Programme (RTP).

For 2011 we set ourselves a new approach: the projects of the RTP were part of a far broader sweep of resilience work - on post-Airwave communications, and the cyber threat, for example - which the TSGs needed to be briefed on. This new scope would call for a bigger conference, so we partnered ourselves with British APCO who helped us to make this happen.

While much of the event was given over to presentations (the programme can be seen at Annex A), input from the delegates was sought through twelve workshop sessions held over the two days and through the completion of event evaluation forms. This

report looks at both sets of feedback. Material from the evaluation forms is presented in two annexes to the report – numerical data is set out in Annex B, and all written comments can be found in Annex C.

This report closes with a brief look at the work being undertaken or planned by Cabinet Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that has a bearing on the points raised.

Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS.

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

Arranged below is an ordering of results from these sessions. Chiefly, this material is in the form of key points made in discussions. Some of these points are amalgams of similar statements of belief expressed by a number of delegates. The questions for consideration were:

1. How can a TSG better support a Strategic Co-ordinating Group during a crisis?
2. What can central government do at a time of changing structures and changing policies to maintain local capability to prepare for telecommunications incidents?

Discussions generally turned on a couple of main areas, and comments have therefore been ordered beneath these. Where the comments made supported the drawing of any conclusions about current practice or belief, these have been summarised at the end.

Day 1 workshop: How can a TSG better support a Strategic Co-ordinating Group(SCG) during a crisis?

Discussion point – Is a rep from the TSG likely to attend?

- There is no role for TSGs as they are planning groups or what one delegate called ‘a slow-time’ resource – thinking about arrangements, identifying gaps, planning to bridge them, etc., but not constituted for ‘real time’ action on the SCG.
- Key members of the Group may well be part of the response and unavailable to attend.
- Risk to telecommunications and need for diversity of options is not always appreciated in SCG where blue light senior officers often hold the view that Airwave is fully resilient.
- The Telecommunications companies would be automatically involved through NEAT to provide updates if lines or networks were down, or they would be directly contacted by the SCG chair – going to them through the TSG is unnecessary.
- Whether or not the TSG is represented at the SCG is dependent on the Gold Commander or what usually happens locally.
- TSG support is via the plan they have written, e.g. its degradation matrix, and communications-related ‘check list’ for Gold Commanders.

- TSGs have a role; some plans incorporate the post of SCG tactical advisor who will pro-actively approach Gold to take the Telco liaison role.
- Since non-telecoms emergencies can still affect telecoms indirectly, there has to be someone at the SCG to consider the possibilities and to be aware of available capabilities; this is needed because if there is no immediate threat or concern the Gold Commander will not be interested.
- Formal accreditation for TSGs would lift their status and make them more likely to be called upon for advice.
- TSGs should be responsible, prior to the establishment of an SCG, for quality assuring the SCC's communications, e.g. email log-ins, firewall issues etc.
- TSGs need to become more effective in 'peacetime' mode. e.g. drawing wider/ better representation, a wider range of skills in their membership, and enjoying full support of LRFs, before consideration is given to their involvement in emergency response

Discussion point – contribution to the SCG through a Science and Technology Advisory Cell (STAC)

- Communications advice could be usefully provided through a special

cell, but at present STACs are almost entirely health orientated.

- TSG's could/should see that communications is included in STAC part of Major Incident Plan
- Technical knowledge necessitates the involvement in TSGs of ICT managers, not just emergency planners, so the make up of the planning group may need to change in many areas.

Broad conclusions

Conversations demonstrated that there was no common acceptance or denial of a role for the TSG - or the nature of any role - in the response, and that there was considerable local variation. It may be stated however that while some Group chairs and members supported attendance and had reflected this in local plans, the majority felt that TSGs had no role at SCGs. Many felt that a TSG's responsibility was discharged with the production and maintenance of a plan which, alongside (or within) the Major Incident Plan, would be 'on the table' for the Gold Commander to use if necessary.

There was additionally some belief expressed that even if a role at SCG could be justified in principle, the current status and skills lodged in the Groups might leave them unprepared for providing technical and/or strategic advice. Better central guidance on

the formation of TSGs might help overcome this.

A STAC was, for some, a way into SCG activities, although it was widely held that the existing constitution and focus of these Cells was too narrow and would need to be looked at by government before they could be properly considered as a vehicle for communications expertise in the response.

The opinions also made visible a belief among some responders that Airwave is now so advanced in user processes and so resilient in technology, that they needed nothing else. For others, Airwave's ascendancy was itself a problem in that it was creating a gulf between the haves (blue lights) and have-nots (for financial reasons – some local authorities and the voluntary sector).

Day 2 workshop: Changing structures, changing policy, maintaining capability – the best way for Government to support activities undertaken at the local level to prepare for telecommunications incidents

Discussion point – Better central support generally

- There needs to be a national process of bench marking of all LRFs to assess how they run the TSGs
- The National Capability Survey (NCS) should cover telecommunications in

more depth to encourage greater local awareness of risks

- The centre should push more on Category 2 engagement with TSGs
- The way in which TSG Chairs can input into EC-RRG and receive reports of its work should be better established.
- TSGs need to be kept up with the 'bigger picture', e.g. national newsletter/centre programme update, which be quarterly and include Local Resilience Area round-ups from the Chairs.
- Case studies of telecoms failures should be made widely available for TSG planning, including a scenario of a complete or near-complete communications failure with possible response actions.
- The centre must task TSGs with work if they are to continue once the plan has been written and periodic one-member responsibilities (e.g. MTPAS) have been assigned.
- CCS should offer guidance on any work coming down to the TSGs which might best be done by one and then shared to save duplicated effort (e.g. as with Airwave 'champions' or SROs)

Discussion point – removal of the Regional Resilience Teams (RRTs) through abolition of the Government Offices

- Loss of the RRTs will have a negative affect on sub-national resilience
- The old Regional TSGs represented an accountability structure which was useful for maintaining the momentum of plan production and aided good practice sharing – some similar forum was needed
- CCS & British APCO should consider provision of plural TSG meetings now that Government Office-led groups have been stood down
- Neighbouring TSGs will lose touch if not linked together by some overseeing process, which could be a meeting or perhaps a visits programme,
- Resource pressures – time and money – prevent LRFs from playing a part in arranging or facilitating multi-TSG meetings. These would have to be RED/CCS driven
- Engagement of Category 2 bodies was only achievable, if patchy, through the Regional TSGs. The Telecoms companies did not join or attend local subgroups.

- Better guidance was needed to explain the possibilities for maintaining telecommunications resilience under the new structures

Broad conclusions

There emerged support for formal processes at the centre to assist with:

- a. the work of the TSGs, e.g. guidance on how the groups could best perform any set task – which could include working across LRF boundaries; keeping the Groups abreast of national work - including that of the EC-RRG; and
- b. increasing the local profile of the groups, perhaps through wider telecommunications coverage in the NCS, or the setting of standards for LRFs to meet.

It was widely felt that neighbouring Groups needed to be connected through some new sub-national arrangements if they were not to lose touch with one another. Where regional groups had existed, it was felt that they were a valuable mechanism for pushing local work on and influencing its quality. TSGs would also struggle to get industry involvement in their planning activity if multi-LRF Groupings were not established.

EVALUATION OF THE SYMPOSIUM

‘Well put together; a good build from day one’, commented one delegate on the evaluation sheet and we are happy to say that this positive tone continued in many of the answers given by those completing their end of event forms.

For a number of questions, delegates were asked to provide a numerical score between 1 and 6 where 1 was coded *strongly agree*. Positive average scores (2.14 and 2.00 respectively) were recorded to questions of whether objectives for the event and the individual learning objectives of attendees had been achieved and no responder to these questions gave a score lower than the mid-way mark of 3.

Rating of the speakers in terms of delivery and content of their presentations was also firmly in the top half of the scale. For delivery, the range was between 1.74 and 2.45, with six of the eleven presentations scoring in the upper third. For quality of content, scores ranged between 1.61 and 2.36 and eight presentations were rated in the top third.

Average evaluation scores for the success of the breakout sessions in enabling a

contribution to policy development in the areas discussed were again in the top half of the range. Commentators gave the session on the role of TSGs in an emergency response an average of 2.50, with 2.90 being the recorded average for the second session of improving engagement.

Delegates were further asked to rate the venue and format of the symposium. Average scores for all aspects of the venue asked about were firmly in the top third of the range with the accommodation scoring 1.12; catering 1.30; workshop rooms 1.39; and location 1.43. ‘Sponsored dinner was well organised and a brilliant opportunity to network’, enthused one colleague in the form’s comments box. Questioned on the inclusion of the exhibition space, 22 out of 23 responses declared it to have been a valuable part of the event.

GOING FORWARD

The Symposium heard from CCS and the Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED) of DCLG about the work they had underway and also that planned for 2012 individually and in partnership to support the TSGs. This included:

- continuing support through national and sub-national events (symposia, workshops) of general interest to TSGs and to aid the approach to specific planning;
- encouraging the establishment of multi-TSG co-operation to continue the wider resilience work of the former regional groups and consider cross-boundary risks;
- helping to engage industry and progress local and sub-national issues through membership of EC-RRG;
- keeping the TSGs informed of current thought and activity at the centre through newsletters and other Resilient Telecommunications Programme updates; and

- assisting local ideas and activity through the distribution of renewed guidance and good practice material.

For delegates' views on future national events, the evaluation exercise showed a majority in favour of an overnight event. One commentator simply remarked, 'This is a good template to build on'. We will try to do just that.

We are happy to receive at any time additional comments and suggestions you may have on the issues covered by the 2011 Symposium or any other matter related to telecommunications resilience. Please email:

Telecommunications.Subgroups@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

ANNEX A

THE PROGRAMME

Day 1 - 26 October 2011	
Time	Item
12.30	Arrival and Marketplace
13.00	Registration
13.30	Welcome and Introduction John Tesh, Deputy Director Capabilities, Civil Contingencies Secretariat
14.00	Resilient Telecommunications – Where are we now? David Barnes, Civil Contingencies Secretariat
14.45	Exercise WATERMARK – Improving communications during emergencies Rod Stafford, Vector Command
15.15	Break
16.00	How can the TSG better support the SCG during a crisis? Workshop discussion
17.00	Planning for life after Airwave: the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme Supt. Jim Bilsland, NPIA
17.30	Review and Close
19.00	Evening Reception and Dinner Sponsored by Page One
Day 2 - 27 October 2011	
Time	Item
09.00	Day 2 Introduction
09.10	Keeping communications running during the Olympics: what do I need to do? Multi-agency panel discussion with question time
09.40	National Resilience Extranet – planning and response within the LRF Kevin Topping, Lancashire County Council
10.10	Break
11.00	Changing structures, changing policy, maintaining capability Workshop discussion
12.00	What does cyber security mean for TSGs? Cyber Security Operations Centre Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure
13.00	Review and Close

ANNEX B

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS FROM THE EVALUATION SURVEY

(1) To what extent did the event achieve its objectives? (1= fully 6 = not at all)						
Average	2.14					
Number of Responses	21					
Minimum	1					
Maximum	3					

(2) To what extent did you meet your learning objectives for the day? (1= fully; 6 = not at all)						
Average	2.00					
Number of Responses	22					
Minimum	1					
Maximum	3					

(3) How well did the presenters deliver their content? (1= fully; 6 = not at all)						
	John Tesh	Dave Barnes	Rod Stafford	Jim Bilsland	Rob Walley	Zonia Brown
Average	2.26	1.91	1.87	2.14	2.00	1.91
Number of Responses	23	23	23	22	19	22
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	4	3	4	4	3	3
	Chris Lucas	Tom Swarbrigg	Kevin Topping	Rob Willis	Cyber Security	
Average	1.95	2.10	1.74	2.38	2.45	
Number of Responses	19	21	23	21	22	
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	
Maximum	3	4	4	6	5	

(4) How applicable/relevant did you find the presentations? (1= fully; 6 = not at all)

	John Tesh	Dave Barnes	Rod Stafford	Jim Bilsland	Rob Walley	Zonia Brown
Average	1.87	1.83	1.91	1.77	1.95	1.78
Number of Responses	23	23	22	22	21	23
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Chris Lucas	Tom Swarbrigg	Kevin Topping	Rob Willis	Cyber Security	
Average	1.80	2.14	1.61	2.36	2.22	
Number of Responses	20	21	23	22	23	
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	
Maximum	4	4	4	4	5	

(5) How did the breakout sessions you attended enable you to contribute to policy development? (1= fully; 6 = not at all)

	TSGs in Emergencies	Improving Engagement				
Average	2.50	2.90				
Number of Responses	20	20				
Minimum	1	1				
Maximum	5	6				

(6) How would you rate the venue on the following criteria? (1= Good 6 = not good)

	Location	Accommodation	Catering	Workshop rooms		
Average	1.43	1.21	1.30	1.39		
Number of Responses	23	19	23	23		
Minimum	1	1	1	1		
Maximum	3	2	3	3		

(7) Please indicate your preference for the length of future symposiums from the following choices

1 day	overnight	2 full days				
5	14	5				

(8) Did you find the addition of the exhibitors' section useful?

YES	NO					
22	1					

ANNEX C

EVALUATION SURVEY COMMENTS

On the new format of the Symposium running over 2 days

- ‘A good central location rather than London, and spread over 2 days allows reflection better than a full on day.’
- ‘The networking aspect is important – it’s great to discuss the challenges other TSGs face.’
- ‘Sponsored dinner was well organised & a provided a brilliant opportunity to network. Please consider repeating it at future events.’
- ‘Worked well for travel.’
- ‘I liked this format.’
- ‘A really good event from which I took a lot of learning.’
- ‘Being from the industry sector much of the information, whilst being interesting, was not really relevant to my business. I would like to see more emphasis on how industry, not the favoured few can engage better with the TSGs & wider resilience community.’

- ‘Much better format; industry lead without sales pitches, well done!’
- ‘Feel that an overnight symposium allows for better networking.’
- ‘I felt it was a great symposium and the panel sessions were particularly good.’
- ‘Very useful in keeping up to date with current issues & challenges, and the evening event provided a good opportunity to network with TSG members & forge working relationships.’

On the addition of an exhibition area

- As one of the themes was Interoperability, it would have been good to have a Command & Control system, for example, Clio, on site.’
- ‘Lots of useful info from AST & Ultra.’
- ‘It added the physical dimension to the learning experience.’
- ‘Please enlarge for future.’

On the parts of the Symposium which were most useful

- The updates – where we are now, access to CO, workshops; Lancashire’s NRE input.’

- 'Resilient Telecoms, Dave Barnes, Lancashire on NRE – both topical plus NRE should be further advanced. Olympics overview also useful.'
- 'Networking, sharing of ideas & best practice, Olympics discussion, NRE presentation.'
- 'National update on resilient comms & NRE.'
- 'Speaking to other TSG chairs & reassurance that my experiences locally are echoed elsewhere.'
- 'Opportunity to renew contacts with other TSG chairs & CCS subject matter experts. Learning about developments (BGAN PAYG, DEIT) which I had not heard about & exchanging views in NRE roll out which is my TSGs current top priority.'
- 'Breakout workshop sessions.'
- 'The Workshops.'
- 'Enjoyed it all – it's good to get out of the office & have time to relax & network.'
- 'Well put together, good build from day one.'
- 'Networking with other chairs and CO colleagues.'
- 'Expectations of TSGs moving forwards.'
- 'Certain presentations, e.g. NRE.'
- 'The panel sessions.'
- 'Networking and Olympics.'
- 'Session on life after Airwave & how this will impact on emergency services. Workshop session on role of TSG during a crisis & how would integrate with other LRF structures & NRE presentation.'

On the parts of the Symposium which were least useful

- 'Cyber security – as a presentation a little short.'
- 'Cyber discussion & Watermark presentation.'
- 'The 2nd workshop – not sure we were linked in!'
- 'Cyber threat; a bit too high level & too general a linkage to TSG grass roots level, not really thought through.'
- 'Exhibition stalls.'
- 'Workshop on day 2.'
- 'ESMCP presentation, which I have seen before.'

- 'Life after Airwave.'
- 'The DCLG slot.'
- 'Cyber security & Watermark outcomes.'
- 'The guest speakers.'
- 'Planning for life after email.'

Further comments

- 'Superb conference, thank you!'
- 'Good event, keep it going as there's an obvious need to raise profile of the TSGs.'
- 'It was very useful; I picked up quite a bit of information to follow up on my return to work.'
- 'This is a good template to build on!'
- 'Overall a good event.'
- 'There is a lot of misunderstanding with regards to Airwave, and it may be appropriate to have a full, accredited Airwave brief – although not a sales pitch – at a future symposium.'