
1. Introduction

- 1.1.** This paper provides an update on our arrangements for business continuity, for preparing and managing our activity in the event of loss of staff, information technology support, office accommodation. This follows a discussion at the last meeting of the Committee in March 2017 where we reported on a test of our emergency alert system (which sends text messages to all members of staff), and the poor response rate that resulted. The Committee requested a further report.
- 1.2.** The HFEA has Business Continuity Plan and a Pandemic Response Plan in place and named staff have responsibilities. Business continuity has a dedicated site in Microsoft Office 365 (a web-based portal where business systems can be accessed with a log-in id and password) where an up to date copy of the Business Continuity Plan and other key documents are made available. All HFEA staff have access to this facility.

2. Effectiveness

- 2.1.** Following the test of the emergency alert system a review was undertaken primarily by surveying staff on their awareness of the arrangements and their experience of using it. The headlines are as follows:
- Only three members of staff reported not receiving the text message saying that business continuity arrangements had been invoked as a test – and that the instruction was to log on to the O365 business continuity page and leave a message of confirmation
 - However, only just over a third of staff could log on to O365 without problem and leave a message
 - Of those, most could access the BCP page – but a few (4) could not, suggesting it was not clear to those staff members how the page could be accessed.
- 2.2.** From this test, it can be concluded that while the arrangements for notifying staff of an incident broadly work (although there are a few issues relating to our holding up to date contact details), there is a significant problem in accessing the BCP site.
- 2.3.** The importance of the site cannot be overstated. The site will be our principal communication channel in any emergency situation and will provide a means by which we can update staff on the status of any incident or interruption to arrangements for business as usual. It will also provide the ability to enable access to (some) corporate files, personal work-related files and email and communications facilities. In other words, the site is the place where business continuity happens.
- 2.4.** Further analysis reveals three main problems relating to logging on (together with several individual-specific issues):
- 1) The user name and password combinations did not work - there is a slightly different sign-in protocol between desktop log-in and O365 sign-in and too many staff were not aware of this.
 - 2) There were compatibility and log-in issues between phones and the O365 site - the text arrived in the evening (obviously) and many staff attempted to use their smartphone to log-in (either personal 'phones or HFEA issue). Around half of staff using phones could not access the site, partly because of compatibility issues and partly log-in difficulties

referenced above. The issues were equally distributed whether the phone was personal or HFEA issue.

- 3) Staff did not have their HFEA issue laptop at home (it is not a requirement that they do) which should be more reliable - that said, some staff with personal PCs and tablets, could log-in and the 'phone related issues were not apparent.

2.5. Clearly this is not a satisfactory situation. However, the very process of going through the exercise and the subsequent survey of staff has raised awareness of both the BCP and the arrangements necessary for accessing O365, together with the business continuity site.

2.6. Many staff have now resolved log-on and password difficulties. In addition to that we have worked (mainly on a one-to-one basis) with colleagues to resolve some of the phone-related issues.

2.7. Nevertheless, this reactive activity needs to be supplemented with a formal and planned set of actions.

3. Actions

3.1. We are taking several obvious actions to embed BCP awareness and enable straightforward access. Ideally we would have liked to be at the stage where we had implemented these actions but due to a range of factors this has slipped a little. These actions include:

- i. Completing an awareness raising communication exercise for current staff. That is a clear set of instructions and advice that staff will sign having received. We expect managers to be responsible for confirming their teams are aware of their obligations relating to business continuity.
- ii. Ensure that the BCP pages are 'device agnostic' – that is wherever and however staff need to access the site they can. This will entail some tweaks to the site and clearer instructions, as part of the above.
- iii. We have introduced a good process for staff joining the HFEA about their awareness of O365, the BCP pages, and the importance of keeping contact details up to date. A process is in place for leavers such that the BCP staffing list is continually updated. Only HFEA staff/members must be able to access the site.
- iv. Now that all Members have access to O365 we will need to roll out BCP arrangements so that Members are integrated to business continuity arrangements.

3.2. We aim to complete this work by the end of June 2017.

4. Next steps

4.1. What has become much clearer over the last few months in considering the plan is the benefits of O365 as an operating system and the potential opportunities it might provide in terms of business resilience on a range of fronts – not just when there is an emergency. In short, the HFEA, could operate as a virtual entity moving the focus away from business continuity to how the HFEA business model promotes efficiency and effectiveness.

4.2. The exercise for considering this should clearly not be mediated through the BCP process. The HFEA strategy sets the vision for us, and the way the HFEA is structured (following the organisational change programme) provides the foundations for this – for example, the

establishing of the Chief Information Officer function; a systems management team focused on resilience and business continuity; an information governance specialism and so on.

- 4.3.** While we will want to take the opportunity to review the BCP over the next few months both in the light of those changes and the technological opportunities available to us, this work will not take our focus from taking the actions set out in section 3 above.
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5. Recommendation:

- 5.1.** The Audit and Governance Committee is asked to note:
- that a series of actions are underway to improve the business continuity arrangements
 - that longer term the Business Continuity Plan itself will be reviewed in the light of experience and the organisational change underway.
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