



CAPTURE, TRANSFORMATION, DISSEMINATION OF LEGISLATION & ASSOCIATED PRODUCTS

Friday, 12 March 2010

Questions and Issues raised by Attendees

SI PRODUCTION & VALIDATION RELATED QUESTIONS

1. Q: Will the current authoring tool [template] be retained?

A: Yes, the current authoring tool which is widely deployed in Departments, will be retained for the foreseeable future. The tool is stable and mature, at version 7. The supplier will need to maintain and enhance the tool as and when required, for example to ensure compatibility with future versions of Microsoft Word. Some further functionality may need to be introduced to meet changing requirements.

Approximately 90% of SIs are drafted in the template. For the remaining 10%, Departments provide text in MS Word which is formatted by the contractor to template specifications. Of those SIs drafted in the template, around 95% are drafted in version 7 with the remainder of templated SIs using various earlier template versions.

2. Q: Is there any prospect of evolving development of the SI Template?

A: The template is designed in such a way that it customises the SI depending on requirements and produces appropriate formatting, e.g. Scottish SIs, UK SIs, etc. These options are offered at the start of creating a new SI/SR and the template automatically displays the appropriate banner and other headings.

3. Q: Who is responsible for providing training for the Template?

A: The current contractor supplies a free training course for new template users through a third-party training organisation.

Most SIs are drafted by lawyers but SIs can be drafted by administrative and ministerial office staff as well as parliamentary clerks. The process of drafting an SI in its entirety does not lie with just one person. Special workshops have been created for specific tasks, for example for training on using the signature block.

4. Q: How many new users are trained annually?

A: There has been an average of 225 new users trained per year over the last 2 years. The majority of training, approximately 98%, has been for the UK SI Template.

5. Q: How many draftsmen use the Template?

A: The installation base of the SI template is very wide and numbers into the thousands. It is not possible to provide figures of how many users there are of the template. We can however provide information on the number of users of the validation portal. There were 1,742 registered users of the validation portal as of 28 February 2010, of which approximately 600 have actively used the portal in the past 18 months. Many Departments have designated a single individual as being responsible for validation, so a single user of the validation portal may be validating for perhaps up to 50 separate draftsmen. The number of submissions per user range from 1 to over 400, with an average of 20 SI submissions per user.

6. Q: Is the validation tool the contractor's [Department's] responsibility or does the SI come to the contractor fully validated?

A: Originating Departments do carry out validation, often several times during the drafting process. This validation can be either basic or full. The contractor also carries out its own full validation of each SI. Some validation checks must be passed in order for the SI to be processed. There are some checks which are subjective, and the document can be processed without the SI necessarily passing these. If the contractor receives an SI that fails validation, it is sent back to the originating Department for amending. The contractor would then repeat the same validation process on receipt of the altered SI.

7. Q: What does validation cover (i.e. content or numbering)?

A: The validation tool of the SI Validation Web Portal runs on a web server. The user's document is tested, paragraph-by-paragraph against a set of rules. These rules include what paragraphs may precede or follow and what mark-up or content is permitted on that paragraph.

SIs are now published in non-print format. In order that they can be electronically processed, the requirement for a clean source document is of paramount importance. Any adjustment of paragraph style or incorrect use introduces a different structure in the electronic content of the document that prevents it being published. In many cases these errors are not easily visible to the human eye.

The portal provides two options for validation:

- **Basic Check**
The Basic Check reports only on high risk errors – those most likely to effect the printing and electronic conversion of the SI. Remaining issues will be corrected by the contractor on the author's behalf and at the author's risk, with changes affecting layout returned to the author for advice.
- **Full Validation**
This level of validation reports all errors found in the document, and allows the author to submit a camera ready copy for publication.

Regardless of the level of validation selected, the SI is considered valid if no Basic Check errors are present. Basic Check errors are identified by the text *BC* before the error message text.

The validation programme has been tested on large organisations and used for some years now.

The SI template has undergone a number of iterations to incorporate new requirements and to adapt to changes introduced by Microsoft in its MS Word application. The latest version of the SI template is version 7. Approximately 95% of SIs drafted using the template are drafted using version 7. The remaining templated SIs are drafted using various earlier template versions.

The validation portal can recognise which version of the template has been used to draft the SI. In other words, if the SI was drafted in any previous versions, the Validation Portal will still accept it for validation.

We are strongly encouraging Departments to only use version 7 from April 2010. This version was devised specifically to handle the 2007 version of MS Word (Office 2007) and to allow SIs to be worked on by different Departments using different versions of Word to ensure no corruption to the document.

8. Q: With the Intellectual Property Right of the Template belonging to the Crown, who is responsible for maintaining the Validation tool [portal]?

A: The current contractor owns the Validation Portal. The supplier is responsible for the development and maintenance of the validation portal.

9. Q: Does contractor validation follow the same process as user validation?

A: Validation is undertaken by users during the drafting process. The contractor then undertakes their own validation prior as part of the publication process, using the same SI validation portal. If the SI fails validation, the contractor backs the SI to the originating department for correction.

10. Q: How much notice does the contractor get of forthcoming SIs and Acts on an average basis?

A: With the exception of budget-related SIs and SIs originating from the monthly Privy Council meetings, there is virtually no notification of the numbers or size of forthcoming SIs.

At present an average of 21 SIs (print and non-print) are sent for processing every day. There are monthly peaks in March, July and December, as indicated in the following table.

Month	2008	2009
March	520	553
July	455	553
December	293	365

It is possible to get an indication of what Acts of Parliament are likely to be forthcoming as the passage of the Bill through Parliament can be tracked. This is primarily estimated by experience rather than official announcement. For Acts and Measures passed by Devolved Parliaments / Assemblies (with the exception of Northern Ireland) the UK Government has one month to scrutinise the legislation prior to it being submitted for Royal Assent.

N.B. The figure of an average of 12 SIs being received per day, quoted at the briefing session, referred to Print SIs only.

11. Q: Can you provide any information on publishing volumes and average number of pages.

A: Information regarding publishing volumes has been provided as part of the briefing pack and can be found online at <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/about/contract-information>.

Between October 2008 and October 2009 there were 1,760 UK print SIs with a total page count of 10,596 equating to an average SI length of 6.02 pages.

12. Q: Where do the documents (SIs) reside?

A: Where the documents reside is dependent on where in the process the SI is. As the SI is drafted by the solicitor, it will reside on the originating Government Department's own network servers. When it is sent to validation portal the document resides there. Once the instrument is made and signed by the minister it is sent to The National Archives' SI Registration team who process it and in turn forward the document together with other supporting documents (Explanatory Memorandum, instructions, etc) to the contractor. The contractor then produces printed copies and publishes on the website.

SYSTEMS RELATED QUESTIONS

13. Q: Can you please provide some information on your "Open Source" policy?

A: Government policy is that we seek to use Open Source where it gives the best value for money to the taxpayer in delivering public services. More information is available at: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/318020/open_source.pdf

14. Q: Are data feeds (XML, RDF, etc.) provided free of charge to customers or is there cost recovery?

A: In keeping with the Government's open data principles, access to the underlying data on legislation.gov.uk through the API in XML and RDF, is offered on the same basis as public access to the HTML version of legislation, which is free of charge. It may be that suppliers propose to offer bespoke or additional services for data supply (e.g. bespoke data formats, guaranteed availability of data under SLA or digital signing of information) beyond those required to be provided free of charge to customers. Such services could be delivered under the contract and the supplier may wish to charge for the provision of those services.

15. Q: Can you expand upon authentication requirements from other systems?

A: Legislation publishing is a process within a broader process involving Government Departments, Parliaments and Assemblies on one side and website and data users on the other.

The supply of data to the contractor is currently via email and the current contractor has a GSE email facility for the secure exchange of certain legislative documents. The validation portal is currently made available using http and https. These will be ongoing requirements.

Downstream, both data and web pages are made available on the open internet. The website makes available both web pages and data using http and https. Any development work being made available on the website for preview and user acceptance testing, is typically secured using basic authentication.

COMMERCIAL & PROCUREMENT RELATED QUESTIONS

16. Q: How different are the contract requirements from those of the current contract?

A: The level of detail for the specifications around data and web delivery is much more exact, and clearer in terms of technology, such as capture tools. There is maturity to a number of elements; and a greater degree of how and what we require than 5 years ago. Also the scope of legislation to be covered is more clearly set this time.

17. Q: Is TNA the ultimate decision maker for approval of new services?

A: Yes, for services delivered under the contract, The National Archives will determine the specification and the arrangements for the provision of those services with the supplier. We will warmly welcome proposals from a supplier to extend the scope of those services in response to identified customer or stakeholder demands.

Beyond the scope of the services specified, re-use of legislation is encouraged. Legislative information, both contents and data, is subject to Crown copyright. It may be re-used free of charge on a non-exclusive basis, by the supplier of these services on the same basis as any other re-user of the information.

18. Q: Can portions of the contract be performed outside of the United Kingdom / Northern Ireland?

A: There may be security conditions which prevent activities being performed outside of the United Kingdom. Providers will need to wait for the release of the ITT to see which, if any, portions of the contract can or cannot be outsourced to locations outside of the United Kingdom.

19. Q: In the FAQs of the previous session TUPE transfer of editorial staff was mentioned. Is this no longer anticipated?

A: It is anticipated, but not yet confirmed, that there may be TUPE transfers. Any such requirement for TUPE transfers will be detailed within the ITT.

20. Q: Can you please expand upon the distinctions between an SPV and a consortium?

A: A consortium is a group of people or organisations that bid for a contract whereas an SPV is the vehicle under which the consortia deliver the contract when they have successfully been awarded the contract.

21. Q: Will an SPV require insurance or will the insurance policies of the individual companies making up the SPV suffice?

A: It is probable an SPV would need its own insurance policy.

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

22. Q: How is collaborative research carried out on legislation and would this be a beneficial feature of any solution?

A: The legislation service is used by a wide group of different people, including those using it for research purposes. Typically people access legislation using standard web search engines such as Google. There is also advanced search facilities designed for

expert users. Any feature that enables people to more easily discover, navigate and explore legislation materials is likely to be beneficial.