



Review of Online Services 2009-10

Responsible Board Member(s) Liz Hallam Smith
Paper prepared by Tracy Green

Date 28 June 2010

- Summary of actions requested:*
- The Management Board is invited to note progress with the website and intranet programme in 2009-10, as outlined in the following paper.
 - The Board is also invited to note that this was the final year of the programme; these activities are continuing on a business as usual shared service basis. A list of benefits realised by the programme is currently being compiled and will come to a future meeting of the Board.

28 June 2010

Liz Hallam Smith

Review of Online Services for 2009-2010

I. Summary

It has been an incredibly busy year for the Web Centre and a huge amount has been achieved as part of the Web & Intranet programme. Developments have contributed to major success across all of our 5 key objectives for the year: improved customer satisfaction (public, staff and members), improved public understanding of and support for Parliament, improved public engagement, interaction and participation, improved efficiency of content management and publication leading to an authoritative, best in class, online presence. The website has seen a number of improvements including enhancements to bills online, the launch of the new Find Your MP application, continuous delivery of new content in the form of news, podcasts and virtual tours, as well as a completely new look and feel and enhanced information architecture right at the beginning of the year. All of these changes have improved the user experience and the user testing and research we have carried out show that levels of satisfaction have remained consistently high.

Similarly, on the Intranet, a number of significant enhancements have been made including the move from an organisational to a task-based information architecture and the introduction of an Online Members Centre for each House. The intranet is now well embedded as one of our core tools for internal communication.¹

The year has also seen an increased level of interaction and online engagement with the public in the form of a number of very successful online forums supporting the enquiries of Select Committees, most notably the forum on the role of the prison officer. Our social media channels have gone from strength to strength with Twitter in particular used very effectively to cover real time events; the election of the new speaker and Prime Ministers Questions. Throughout the year the team's work has been underpinned by thorough user research and testing to ensure that our online channels are developed in line with best practice and are professional, accessible and engaging. Throughout the year customer satisfaction stayed relatively even at about 75% with only a small blip at the time of the publication of Members allowances in June.

The most significant pieces of work during the year however have been two major implementations; the development of our new content management system and the search engine for both the website and the intranet. The implementation work was largely completed by the end of the financial year in time for the general election and the return of the new Parliament to meet the challenges that the new Parliament will bring.

This huge programme of work has taken place against the backdrop of a changing team, with new staff recruited, as well as new challenges and opportunities. Recommendations from the Information Committee's enquiry into connecting Parliament with the public has shown that the importance of digital channels for Parliament is increasing and we need to find new ways of ensuring we use them to full advantage.

¹ The web centre is currently undertaking further development work on the intranet (see next page); comments, feedback and suggestions should be routed via Tracy Green (EHS).

2. Improved customer satisfaction (public, staff and members)

A number of pieces of work have ensured that levels of customer satisfaction have been maintained.

2.1 Website redesign

At the beginning of the year (April 2009) a new design was implemented across the public website, which also introduced a new topical issues area. This improved the navigability of the site, as well as enhancing the look and feel, presenting a more modern look and ensuring key content areas based on issues could be promoted. Another key feature in June 2009 was the re-launch of the Find Your MP functionality with increased flexibility to allow users to search by postcode, as well as by constituency and MP's name.

2.2 Intranet

The intranet too saw significant change with new information architecture (structure) launched in June 2009 that reorganised the site to be task based rather than organisationally based. Benchmarking sessions before and after the changes, were carried out with parliamentary staff and showed that there has been some improvement in the user experience and ease with which content could be found. However, there are still some areas that need further work including the Employment and Finance section and we will be working closely with the relevant stakeholders over the coming months to ensure that all of these content areas are working effectively.

The intranet, as a corporate tool for internal communications with members and staff, is beginning to take shape. The launch of the site on the new cms included the introduction of a new look and feel which more clearly defines the intranet as distinct from the website, but which is consistent with our other online channels. The separate home pages for Lords members and their staff, Commons members and their staff and staff of each house will enable us to deliver more targeted communications to these distinct audiences and therefore exploit this channel as an efficient mode of internal communications much more effectively.

2.3 Online Members Centres

The new Online Members Centres were also launched in June 2009, aggregating key information for members of each House in a single place. These portals were developed following comprehensive consultation with members and their staff on the resources that are of most use to this audience.

2.4 Transactional Services

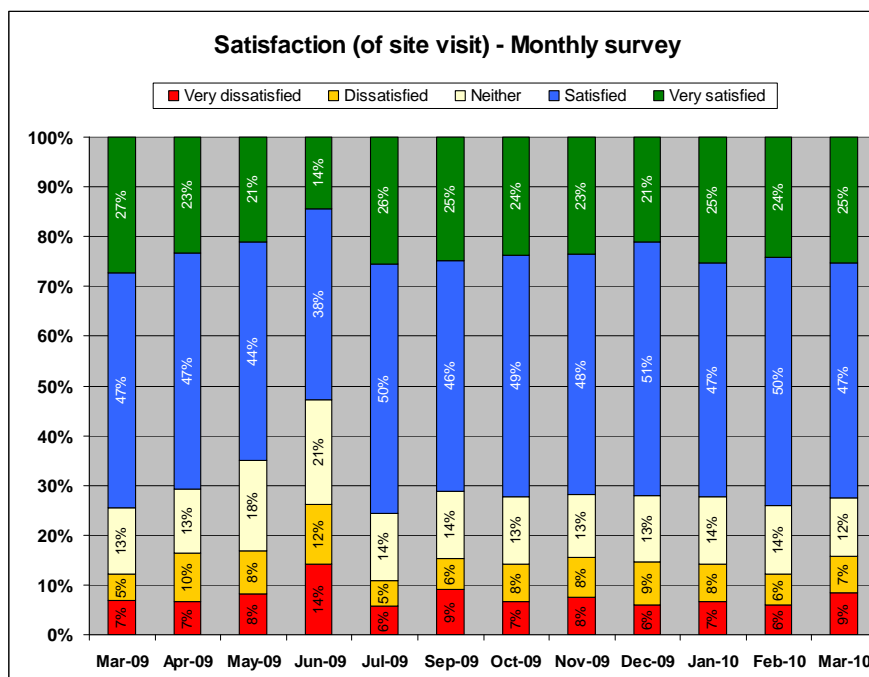
Other new services developed on the intranet during the year include booking forms for new members to attend briefing sessions and an order form for the Vote Office. Many more transactional services will be added to the intranet during the coming year so that it can support the streamlining of business processes and reduce costs.

2.5 Mobile Devices

Another major new service introduced at the end of the year is the delivery of services and content for members on mobile devices in time for the new Parliament. Three new mobile applications are now available from m.parliament.uk and accessible from all devices: a parliament map allows members to find their way from one place to another; a calendar provides business information on the move and the annunciator keeps members up to date on what's happening in each chamber. These applications have all been developed by the PICT web development team under Chris Bond. Other key content that is available from the intranet has also been tailored for mobile including business papers for each House, news, library and catering information.

2.6 Satisfaction

Levels of satisfaction have remained consistently good throughout the year with around 75% of respondents either satisfied or very satisfied. The only dip was seen in June when the publication of members' allowances seemed to filter through to impact overall levels of satisfaction for website visitors.



3. Improved public understanding of and support for Parliament

Throughout the year the web team have sought to explain parliamentary events and procedures in a way which is easy for the public to understand and using a variety of channels to increase our reach.

3.1 Content initiatives

The election of the new speaker in June 2009 gave us the opportunity to cover the event using Twitter. We had a real time Twitter stream which gave updates on each round of the election and promoted related content on our website. Close working with the Media Office and HCIO meant that we had access to vote results before the media so we could be the authoritative source of information on this. Twitter has a mechanism for aggregating all comments regarding a particular issue using the hash tag # and the one we used #speakersselection was taken up by all those on Twitter talking about the event. The contextual information on our site was key to the success of this initiative as was the collaboration with colleagues outside the Web Centre. A similar approach was taken with other key events such as the pre-budget report and state opening of Parliament which meant each time we were able to increase our reach and enhance public understanding of parliamentary process.

Living Heritage

A key area of new content for 2009 was the Living Heritage area of the site which went live to coincide with the People and Parliament: Connecting with Communities project. This area includes content about the history of Parliament, its buildings and collections, and connects

this with a contemporary context. Putting this area of the site together was a huge exercise and required all of the content to be written from scratch.

3.2 Procedural content

Work on the business content has improved it considerably during the year.

Hansard

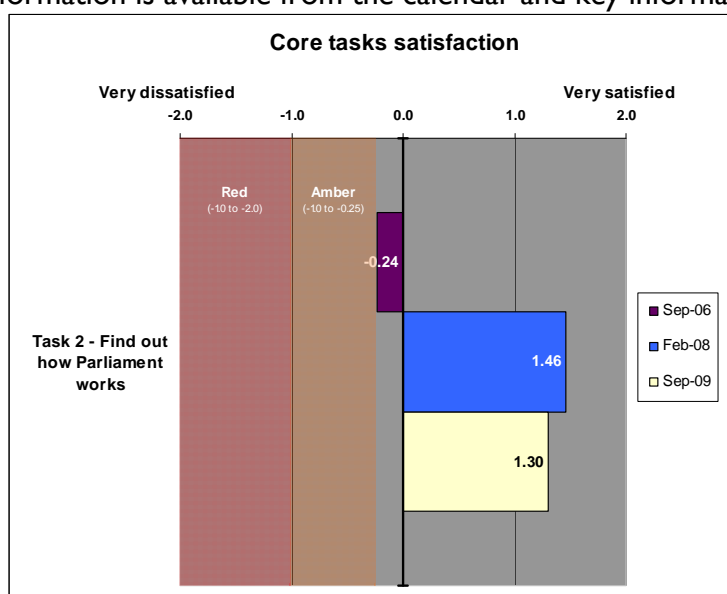
The Hansard beta site went live on 1st June 2009 as a pilot, demonstrating a much more user friendly presentation of the information including improvements to the layout, content list, and font size as well as better chunking of content – so that you can view/print a whole debate without having to click on the continue button. The work done on Hansard Beta will inform how the feed from the new Hansard Reporting Suite being developed as part of the Procedural Data programme can be better presented online.

Topical Issues

The Topical Issues channel was launched in April 2009 as part of the redesign and pulls together information thematically, based on the library taxonomy. To begin with it encompassed library content and news, research papers, standard notes and EDMs. In the autumn, committee reports were also added and in the coming year statements and debates will also be included. This is a key content area on the site driven by the increasing interest that the public has in issues.

Bills and calendar

Further work on Bills Online has ensured that the process for legislation is now much easier to understand. A graphical representation of the passage of a bill through parliament has been highly praised and the stage each piece of legislation has reached is graphically indicated on the page of each bill. We have also been experimenting with the presentation of changes to bills and the interleaving of explanatory notes. Both PICT and TSO have run pilots to demonstrate what can be achieved and this will be further progressed in 2010/11. Further integration of bill information into the calendar has also been progressed to ensure comprehensive information is available from the calendar and key information is promoted.



4. Improved public engagement, interaction and participation

2009 saw the enthusiasm for engagement increase, particularly in the work of Select Committees. We ran a number of very successful forums during the year which focused on widening the reach of a number of inquiries and at one point had 5 forums running simultaneously. Two forums that were particularly successful were the role of the prison officer and the future of the post office. Each of these forums was run in close consultation with the relevant select committee and promoted to the relevant, key target audience. In the case of the prison officer forum, this was linked from the intranets used by prison officers and generated some very positive and constructive comments and debate that was later referred to in the committee's report.

We continued to use the Parliament Flickr channel throughout the year to promote positive images of Parliament and to tell stories about events from a slightly less familiar perspective such as visits by committees to the regions. The Parliament YouTube channel has been used in a similar way to promote video content to a broader audience such as the interviews with the Speaker recorded by Jude Crocker.

The Parliament Twitter channel has seen a growth of more than 100% in followers to almost 20,000 during the year and as described above we have exploited this channel to great effect in terms of covering parliamentary events and promoting our content.

Several content areas across the site including news and bills are now available as RSS feeds so that users can subscribe to particular areas of interest.

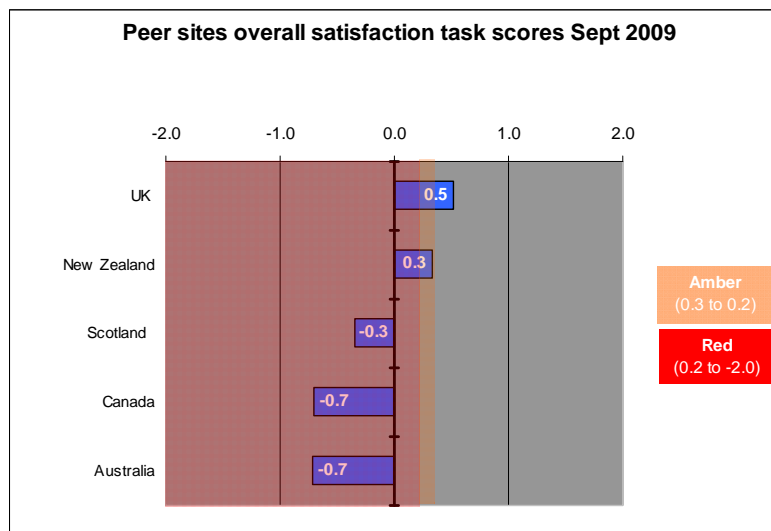
5. Authoritative best in class online presence providing improved effectiveness

The team have continued to put content at the heart of everything we do and this has seen some outputs of excellent quality during the year.

The programme of Virtual Tours has continued apace and is the jewel in the crown of the site. New tours launched during the year include the Lords Library, the Basement, St Stephens Hall and the Undercroft Chapel. Another new feature that was introduced was the map providing links to each of the online tours which works as an effective navigational aid.

A number of new and engaging Podcasts have also been produced including interviews with the new Speaker, the Great Fire of 1834 and execution of Charles I. Dynamic content like this has really brought the site to life for visitors and receives very positive feedback. News content has continued to go from strength to strength as an area of the website for highlighting the work of Parliament and we published our 3000th new story during the year since the news area went live in September 2008.

The Education Service exploited the web throughout the year, launching a number of new digital games including MP for a Week and whiteboard resources for teachers in the classroom. These initiatives were funded by the web and Intranet programme and received very positive, high profile coverage in the media.



6. Improved efficiency of content management and publication

The key strands of work during the year have been the implementation of our new content management system (CMS) Episerver and search engine.

6.1 New content management system

Procurement for the CMS began in April 2009 following approval from the Web & Intranet Board in February to proceed. The procurement was facilitated by the Central Office of Information (COI) interactive services roster. Many of the digital agencies on the roster had sound experience of implementing our chosen CMS, Episerver, and so the framework was ideal and ensured the procurement could be completed fairly quickly. After having significant interest in the project the field was narrowed to 4 companies with LBi selected as the partner agency. Work began in earnest in August 2009 to ensure that the Works of Art website could be delivered first. The site was delivered in January 2010, after slight delays to ensure as many images as possible would be available for go live and that they were searchable. The site was highly praised by the Commons Works of Art Committee. In parallel to the development of the art in parliament site, LBi also began work scoping the requirements for the migration of the parliament.uk site to Episerver. The work was broken down into phases and a number of sophisticated functional requirements incorporated including direct feeds from the new Members Names system. Both the Parliament website and Intranet were migrated to Episerver by April 2010 and the new sites live before the return of the new Parliament. The new CMS ensures Parliament's sites can be managed much more cost effectively (a number of costs will be saved as a result of rationalising our online content onto a single platform). A significant training programme began in March to ensure that all web editors across parliament (about 200) can have responsibility for managing their own content, keeping it up to date and accurate. This has been a significant piece of work but allows us as an organisation to exploit digital technology much more effectively to support the work we do.

6.2 Search

The procurement for a new search engine was also completed during 2009 following the start of the process in the previous year. The route for this procurement was via the OJEU route. Following short listing to three companies, System Associates were selected in

September to implement open source technology Lucene. Simple search was completed very quickly and live by the end of September on the Parliament website to coincide with the end of the previous contract with Google. The next phase of the project was to implement search on the works of art website which was complete in time for the launch of the site in January.

Advanced search on the web and search on the intranet were completed by the end of March. However, there still remains a significant piece of work to do around fine-tuning the way search works and ensuring that our content is tagged effectively and the right content items promoted on both the website and the intranet so that we get the results from the search tool that we expect and make the most of this investment. This work will be on-going over the coming months and will benefit from the work of the CPIMF and Procedural Data Programme. The introduction of faceted search on both the website and the intranet will be a key development next year.

7. User research

Throughout the year, the user research that we carry out via our monthly survey provided us with an insight into how satisfied our target audiences are with our online presence. We have also worked with Optimum Web, our user research consultancy, to develop a tool to measure more effectively the impact of the work we do, developing specific KPIs that feed into our objectives. This will be taken forward actively in the coming year.

8. The other stuff

There have been a number of other significant exercises during the year that have required work and commitment from the web team.

As well as the whole team moving offices in April 2009 to 4 Millbank, there have been two recruitments to the web centre during the year and the team has undergone some restructuring. Four new BI roles were created; Website manager, Intranet Manager, Head of User Experience and Head of User Engagement. The aim was to provide some structure to the team and more hierarchical line management so that the two A2 roles could more effectively and supportively of the team leader. The roles were filled by two internal promotions and two external candidates following an external competition.

Members allowances were published for the first time in June 2009 and the web centre had to focus on ensuring the website would be resilient enough to deal with the inevitable spikes in traffic as a result. We worked with PICT and TSO to put in place a solution with Akamai that would prevent the website from falling over and being unavailable which would have damaged the reputation of the House. This was done successfully and in a very short space of time so that the publication on the day and subsequent days went very smoothly.

The General Election has also required a significant amount of planning, co-ordination and content preparation since the beginning of 2010, involving several members of the team as well as colleagues across both houses. In the run-up to the election we had a General election section on the site which pulled in content from other areas to provide a context for the election itself. In addition, the members names project now feeds the website via the cms with a dynamic list of members names from both the Lords and the Commons, linking through to contact and biographical information supplied in a feed from Dods.

Appendices

- A. Financial summary
- B. Key milestones
- C. Statistics

Appendix A

Web & Intranet programme - Financial summary 2009/10

Project	£
Procedural (Bills, calendar PICT staff costs)	168,269
Content management system for website and intranet including intranet design and mobile	760,619
CMS training	15,484
Monitoring	30,875
Education	149,040
Works of Art	154,220
Support, hosting and other running costs	115,257
VIPOR	19,220
Search	212,746
Information architecture and design	145,851
Living Heritage	16,000
Audio Visual	90,108
Web Centre staff costs (PQAA only)	564,690
Agency staff	91,129
Other PICT staff costs	151,536
Consultancy	85,465
User research (usability, accessibility testing)	212,244
Data and images	36,187
Training (web centre staff and PICT)	11,937
Project management	126,090

Appendix B – Key milestones

Milestone	Completion/go live date
New Web IA and design (high level pages)	10-Apr-09
Find your MP new version release	28-Apr-09
New Intranet IA in place (phase 1)	12-Jun-09
Intranet Members Portal	Jun-09
MPs allowances publication	Jun-09
Living Heritage go live	01-Jul-09
CMS partner contract awarded	14-Aug-09
Search contract awarded	7-Aug-09
New (simple) Search implemented on website	24-Sep-09
Bills Online 2	18-Nov-09
Members Allowances Phase 2	Dec-09
Works of Art Go Live	Jan-10
Advanced Search Implemented	May-10
Intranet Search Implemented	May-10
Bills Interleaving (Prototype)	Jan-10
CMS Migration Phase 1 & 2 (Build)	Jan-10
Bills and Calendar integration	Jan-10
CMS Migration Phase 3 (Build)	Feb-10
CMS Migration Phase 1-3 Training/UAT completed	May-10
Final Migration & Go Live Website (phase 1-3)	May-10
AV Widget	May-10
Final Migration Go Live Intranet (phase 4)	May-10

Appendix C – Statistics

For the whole site:

Visitors	7.9 million (up 100,000 on FY 08/09)
Return Visitors	1.18 million (up 40,000 on FY 08/09)
Visits	11.31 million (up 50,000 on FY 08/09)
Page Views	48.74 million (down 1.9 million on FY 08/09)

For publications:

Visitors	4.68 million (down 0.58 million on FY 08/09)
Visits	6.55 million (down 0.6 million on FY 08/09)
Return Visitors	772,729 (down 23,000 on FY 08/09)
Page Views	24.65 million (down 1.83 million on FY 08/09)

As of May 20th 2010 - total stats for social media

Twitter – 19529 followers
Youtube – 649,694 views
Flickr – 590,610 views
Facebook – 3617 fans