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BECTA REMIT LETTER TO MARCH 2002

Following publication of the Quinquennial Review, I am writing to set out the strategic objectives for Becta and the specific key tasks that we would like you to deliver by March 2002. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this letter at a future Becta Board meeting, and would like to monitor progress against these key tasks with you every two months, with an informal review meeting every other month with Imogen Wilde and Doug Brown.

Strategic objectives

Becta fulfil three key roles that need to be built on. First, there is a need for schools, colleges and Education Authorities to have access to high quality advice and support on ICT. Second, the Government also needs high quality, proactive advice on ICT policy and spending issues. Third, the Government needs advice on technical issues to do with ICT.

On the first of these, Becta need to be seen by schools, colleges and Education Authorities as a lead provider of information and advice on ICT, including issues to do with accessible infrastructure, particularly technical support, and making ICT integral to the learning process, particularly by promoting and disseminating good practice.

We want Becta to demonstrate that they are the key agent in providing advice to schools and colleges. We expect Becta to make direct contact (ie. not through a mailshot) with at least 10% of schools in England by March 2002 to raise awareness of how Becta can advise and help schools on ICT issues, with Becta being able to demonstrate that at least a quarter of that number of schools seek more in-depth advice from Becta. We would expect this role to be developed in the future.

On the second, we want Becta to provide proactive advice to the Government on achieving the DfES's three strategic aims for ICT, which are:

- to create an accessible infrastructure which makes ICT universally available to learners;
- to make ICT integral to all our learning processes and to stimulate the

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development and acceptance of new ways of learning;

- to create, implement and support a dynamic framework for ICT skills and a corresponding framework for teachers.

In particular, we will want advice on issues that feed into the Spending Review and improving teachers' basic and pedagogical ICT skills.

Finally, on technical support, the Government needs to have a resource that can provide advice proactively on technical developments within the ICT industry. This needs to include monitoring the latest developments, for example on filtering systems to protect children using the internet.

Specific objectives

Within the broad remit set out above lie a wide range of individual projects which we will want Becta to continue to take forward, providing robust, concise and timely advice to the Government on progress, including any problems as they arise. In order to fulfil these tasks, Becta should be up to date with the latest developments in ICT and cutting edge good practice. The organisation should use that knowledge to provide clear and authoritative advice and support not only to the Government, but also to schools and Education Authorities as they continue to invest heavily in ICT and software content.

Strong project management will be needed to ensure that projects are clearly established and that problems and issues are discussed with the Department at an early stage. We look to Becta's management to ensure this is the case. As was recently agreed, any problems or blockages with the Department that you feel prevent Becta from delivering should be discussed with the relevant project manager. In exceptional cases problems can, of course, be raised with Owen McConnell.

A list of the projects that we consider key is set out below. Unless specified, we expect Becta to undertake these projects from within existing agreed budgets. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, but it does set out the key areas of work we want you to take forward.

Creating an accessible infrastructure:

- a. Managed services: we will want Becta to take forward work coming out of the review of managed services, including running the competition to identify suitable suppliers with a view to announcing successful suppliers in Spring 2002. We will need to agree funding for this.
- b. Independent Procurement Advisory Service: this pilot project to provide independent advice to schools on procurement issues such as contracts, service agreements, EU requirements, areas of risk and financing agreements, covering five Education Authorities is due to go live in September. We will want Becta to manage the provision of this service, including any further recruitment and training of staff needed, and to report back progress on a monthly basis. We currently plan to pay Becta £529,000 for this.
- c. Customer Satisfaction Survey of ICT suppliers to schools: subject to DfES Star Chamber agreement of the proposal, we will want Becta to prepare an invitation to tender, advise on the questions to be asked in the survey, evaluate tender proposals and manage the setting up and delivery of the Customer Satisfaction Survey, with a view to publishing the results at the next BETT show in January 2002. We will need to agree funding for this.

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- d. Technical Support: Becta should complete the evaluation of models of technical support and have produced advice for schools based on this by the end of September 2001. In addition, Becta should place, and actively promote, technical support advice on the NGfL website, including advice from the evaluation but also other material being created within the current project. The website material should be revised with any additional material in December and subject to a substantial review in February 2002. We are currently planning to pay Becta £48,000 for this.
- e. Telecommunications Intelligence Unit: the unit, for which we currently plan to pay Becta £230,000, should:
- early autumn: undertake a pricing survey of Internet Service Providers serving the educational market, and produce a report and publish it on a website;
 - by December 2001: carry out a connectivity survey of a cross-section of schools and produce a report;
 - provide current and regular information to secular professionals on technical and regulatory issues;
 - provide regular, strategic intelligence about the operation of the market to DfES;
 - produce regular information sheets on telecommunications and networking;
 - develop and maintain a dialogue with the telecommunications industry.
- f. National Learning Networks: Becta play a key role in this project to ensure the effective management, delivery and evaluation of IT implementation in the Further Education sector. We currently plan to spend £42 million a year on this project, supplemented by the £170 million that colleges are estimated to spend annually on ICT. We are currently in negotiations with the LSC on the future shape of the National Learning Networks and Becta's continuing role and responsibilities within it. We will want to see clear deadlines and milestones agreed with the LSC on this.

Making ICT integral to learning

- g. NGfL portal, including the VTC: Becta need to maintain these sites and add the new material and functionality as follows (funding needs to be agreed):
- provide ongoing advice to industry representatives and developers on requirements for linking to the NGfL portal;
 - develop and use an enhanced tool for tagging contributions to the NGfL site so that they can be more easily found by search engines by October 2001;
 - subject to agreement of the proposal, set up a system to indicate age-appropriateness of material held on the site; and
 - ongoing improvements to the functionality of the Virtual Teacher Centre and the Teacher Resource Exchange, including a facility to 'contribute' ideas and lesson plans.

We also want Becta to maintain and develop its own website, along with the full range of associated products and services that it provides, including the ICT support network and Teachers Online functions.

- h. Grid Club: as you know, this will be an online fun filled safe environment for children aged between 7 to 11 years who register through their schools,

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allowing them to e-mail each other, share ideas and play interactive games. Becta need to manage the project, including ongoing management of the evaluation of the service until the contract termination on 31 July 2003. The next Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for 28 September at which time a re-launch of Grid Club is planned with Ministerial participation.

- i. Evaluation of KS3 pilots in maths, Latin and Japanese: Becta's Project Management support for these pilots is expected to cost £98,300. This includes the production of evaluation reports on the pros and cons of the approach adopted by each contractor and the lessons and recommendations to inform future work in this area. Becta has yet to agree the evaluation report for these pilots, which is needed by the end of the calendar year.
- j. Key Stage 3 ICT: we are grateful to Becta for the important work it has undertaken in developing and piloting a teaching and learning programme designed to improve the teaching of ICT at Key Stage 3. We look forward to your continuing support as the management of this work transfers to the Standards and Effectiveness Unit in preparation for national roll-out to secondary schools in 2002-2003.

In addition, by December 2001, we would like Becta to advise on infrastructure and technical capacity within schools and Education Authorities for pupils to sit the on-line tests for Key Stage 3 ICT. It should include the development of measures for providing accurate incremental data on how secondary schools are progressing towards meeting the specification required for delivering the online ICT test. We need to agree funding for this work.

- k. Computers for Teachers: the Department will be spending £50 million on this initiative over the next three years, and we would like Becta to continue to support future phases including managing the accreditation of suppliers and maintaining the website. Timing at this stage is yet to be firmed up, though we will be likely to run a further phase within the 2001-02. We will need to agree funding levels for the service that Becta provide on this.
- l. Promoting effective use of ICT in education: we would like Becta to develop a programme of activity, centred on the good practice website, to stimulate debate and promote effective practice in the use of ICT in teaching. The work could include asking leading ICT practitioners to host 'hot seats' to chair discussions on aspects of good practice identified in the debate. Candidates for the hot seats could include the ICT in Practice award winners. We would like to have monthly meetings to report progress and discuss how best to stimulate the debate including identifying other opportunities for raising awareness of good ICT practice. This could include linking up with ICT events such as the Ofsted events or the new Classroom of the Future road shows that we are planning to run. This activity should also look at how to use existing websites and discussion groups to promote good ICT pedagogy, for example the teachers on line project or the Computers for Teachers website. We would expect Becta to deliver this from within their core funding, though any further activity identified by the debate and its evaluation may need to be funded.

In addition we would like Becta to continue to take forward the ICT in Practice awards, which reward and promote exemplary ICT practice. We would also like Becta to continue to run the website for the classroom of the future, and to monitor and report on the discussion forum. And we would like Becta to continue to run the ICT Support Network, which helps people find the right ICT support for their school. All these tasks will need to be done within Becta's core funding.

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- m. SEN communication aids: Becta are managing on our behalf a £10 million project over the next three years to develop centres to assess the needs of and supply communication aids to children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities. They will report to us via a steering group set up for the project. Specific milestones are:
- by October 2001: submit proposals for pilots for the project to the Steering Group;
 - by December 2001: purchase a range of equipment for six centres, which will assess children's needs and enable them to try out different communication aids - the existing ACE centres (North and South) and four others;
 - by February 2002: establish a pilot involving different Local Education Authorities to test the practical working of the project, including the success of the six centres in assessing the needs of and providing equipment to children and young people. This phase will identify any general issues that may need to be resolved before the project rolls out nationally.
- n. Inclusion Site: Becta develop and manage the Inclusion site on our behalf. Work in the current financial year is focused mainly on developing a broader range of content across a wider range of areas and encouraging schools, voluntary agencies and Education Authorities to develop and share more web based resources. By the end of March 2002 we will want the site to include: (i) case studies of classroom practice; (ii) an area to show how teachers have used particular resources for inclusion; (iii) more effective links to content in other sites on the NGfL; (iv) an improved Key Documents area; and (v) developing an improved news system. We are paying Becta £135,000 for this.
- o. SEN Code of Practice: Becta are partners with DfES in eight regional conferences in the autumn to prepare Education Authorities and others for the introduction of the revised SEN Code of Practice. In addition to helping us plan for the events and providing a stall at each conference to promote the inclusion site, by November 2001 we want Becta to set up a "virtual" conference on the National Grid for Learning with material from the live conferences, discussion forums and video material. The virtual conference is likely to run until February 2002, when we will want an evaluation report. Funding needs to be agreed for this.
- p. Digital Learning Services Prospectus for Evaluation: Becta will manage and let the contracts for those evaluating the innovative learning services by the end of September 2001, and oversee the evaluation of the 17 successful learning services during the period October to December 2001. Interim evaluator reports will be needed by 14 December 2001 and final reports by 18 January 2002. We need to agree funding for this.
- q. Internet Safety: Becta will continue to manage the Superhighway Safety site, including the revision and redesign of the site by the end of October 2001 for re-launch in the week commencing 5 November 2001. This will include the production of a publication for parents (in either hardcopy or electronically, to be decided) and the piloting of an Internet Proficiency scheme. Advice and guidance to the Department on children's safe use of the Internet will be ongoing, with input into the NGfL Roadshows. We need to agree funding for this.
- r. UK online: We are grateful for the technical expertise provided by the Community Programmes team and need continued support from Becta to host

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and manage the UK online centres website. The team has also provided valued support in the assessment and monitoring of existing ICT centres that have applied for the UK online brand. Contracts are already in place for both activities and we are in discussions with Becta regarding additional resources for their sectoral role in monitoring the quality of UK online centres.

Becta will also support the Capital Modernisation Fund UK online centres initiative, mopping up any residual work on the technical assessment of applications for funding. This will be at no cost to the Department other than the current contract.

- s. City Academies: the City Academies Unit here are evaluating proposals from the private sector to set up City Academies, which need to have state of the art ICT systems in place. We would like Becta to advise the team on the proposed ICT specifications to ensure that the level of provision:
- is appropriate for a school of the proposed size, age range and specialism;
 - reflects the expectation that City Academies will have "state of the art" facilities;
 - is in line with best practice across the schools sector;
 - is sufficiently flexible and adaptable; and
 - is affordable and offers value for money.

We need to agree funding for this work.

Creating a dynamic framework for ICT skills

- t. ICT training post NOF: we are currently tendering for online training modules for using ICT in literacy and numeracy in primary schools and Key Stage 3 Science. We would like Becta to set up a management board, evaluate the project and oversee the acceptance testing of the materials and their delivery. We would also like Becta to draw up the statement of service agreement and play an active role in the assessment of tenders, with a view to appointing contractors by the end of the year. We will need to agree funding levels and milestones for this project but would expect them to be in line with the proposal already submitted to NGfL division by Becta.
- u. Pilots for the use of ICT in the strategic management of schools: these pilots are currently underway with the National College of School Leadership (NCSL). We will want Becta to work with NCSL to deliver the four pilot courses and evaluate their effectiveness. The evaluation of the pilots should be ready this Autumn and should include an assessment of whether the pilot model is sustainable and whether the programme could be delivered at a national level.

Cross cutting:

- v. Spending Review 2002: the Spending Review is critical to the success of our ICT policies and Becta will need to play a significant role in helping to marshal the arguments in favour of ICT in education and providing strong evidence to back up those arguments. Becta should be prepared to provide support at very short notice - in some cases days rather than weeks - as well as providing support in a series of ICT in schools strategy meetings already being set up. This work is expected to include the speedy supply of evidence on a range of topics as well as detailed advice on costings and related procurement issues. Becta need to meet these costs from within agreed budgets.

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- w. Provide expert, objective, well-researched advice on how to ensure whole school and learning management is underpinned by cost effective information management and ICT: we want Becta to continue to work closely with the DfES information management strategy programme to ensure that all schools are capable of realising the benefits of management ICT for raising standards (including monitoring pupils' progress and exchanging pupil information), and minimising burdens through automation and streamlined administration. In particular, Becta should:
- by October 2001: review and revise its senior management website to ensure that it meets the identified needs of leadership teams, promotes management ICT, and complements the information management strategy;
 - by December 2001: ensure that the senior management website has comprehensive and current information about the availability and efficacy of school management software;
 - by December 2001: complete the production of, and publish on-line, 50 case studies in support of Becta's primary school publication 'Management Information Supporting success in Primary Schools' and to promote whole school ICT networks through the integration of management and curriculum systems; and
 - by March 2002: develop a framework for further embedding management ICT in 2002 - 2003.

In addition, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) will be submitting their final report on teacher workloads. We would like Becta to consider the findings of the report and provide a commentary on the ICT implications for schools and Education Authorities, with a view to reporting in October. The final PWC report will be available by the end of November, and we would like Becta to provide a further advice on that in December. All this work is to be done from core funding and agreed budgets.

- x. Forging effective links with LSC and its e-learning committee and Ufl and learndirect: we want Becta continue to build effective links with these organisations in order to find ways to provide comprehensive and strategic support and advice to schools and colleges on the effective use of ICT in education. Funding will need to be agreed for any specific activities, once it is clear what the LSC, Ufl and learndirect require of Becta.
- y. Research and Evaluation: it is increasingly important that we have robust evidence to underpin our policies. Becta need to lead on this, working closely with the Department's Analytical Services Divisions and the ICT Research Centre. In particular, Becta manages two major projects on behalf of the Department and these must deliver robust results:
- Becta need to quality assure and report emerging findings from the ImpaCT2 quantitative survey on ICT and attainment in October 2001 and delivering a full draft of the final ImpaCT2 report from the independent researchers by March 2002.
 - the Pathfinder evaluation project to managed according to the agreed milestones and a full strategy to effectively disseminate the key findings to be developed over the Autumn and ready for launch in advance of the BETT show in January 2002.

We also wish to see a fully prepared concise final draft of the 'School of the Future' report ready by November with a view to publication at BETT.

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I know Becta runs other research and evaluation projects and we expect these to operate effectively and to the agreed timescales, but the projects above are key.

- z. BETT: we expect Becta to be seen as a major player in BETT 2002, and to promote the activities you are involved, both with industry and with delegates attending.

In addition to these specific projects, we would like you to work with the devolved administrations as agreed with them.

CATHERINE ASHTON