Sustainable IT and energy efficient data centre

THE DIGITAL revolution has seen IT's global carbon footprint rise to equal that of the aviation sector. The production, use and disposal of constantly evolving IT infrastructure have implications for environmental, social and economic factors. As a result, organizations are increasingly being challenged to manage their operational expenditure more effectively.

The BSI Conference on Tuesday 12th February saw the meeting of like-minded professionals committed to increasing their understanding of sustainability in order to achieve excellence and make a difference. A smarter use of IT does not only drive down costs but cuts carbon emissions through other factors such as staff travel via mobile working, video conferencing, etc.

It was a momentous first for the industry having representatives from government departments with industry and standards bodies together to discuss what the industry needs are for standards, energy and sustainability. The expert panel of speakers shared their experiences and best practice on the application of IT and minimising its resource-use. Key areas included:

- Current legislation and government initiatives
- Learning about data-centre designs
- Discovering more about the effective management of ICT
- Understanding how the efficient use of ICT contributes to the wider business your experiences and having questions answered by an expert panel.
- Having the chance to attend various workshops and suggesting solutions for providing better interoperability of products and services.

Chaired by yours truly, the event consisted of speakers from BSI, The Data Centre Alliance, the EEDO, part of DECC, Ark Continuity and Mustikka Limited,.

This was followed by three breakout sessions to address different aspects of Sustainable IT – Energy Efficient Data Centres standardization. The event provided BSI with an insight on areas on which to focus future standardisation efforts, and how the needs of this community might best be addressed.

Data centres' role in government's ICT savings programme

By Huw Owen, Chief Executive Officer, Ark.

THE ISSUE of savings in Government is at the top of the political agenda at the moment as Ministers try to cut costs across all departments. The Government claims that the efficiency programme has delivered £12 billion of savings to date. Following news that energy prices are set to rise as gas imports increase and UK power stations close, energy efficiency programmes will need to roll out across not only Government but all UK businesses.

Information technology is no different and the issue was brought up in a recent Parliamentary discussion into ICT savings in which the Cabinet Minister with responsibility for ICT, efficiency and reform, the Rt Hon Francis Maude MP was asked about his plans to achieve greater value for money for the taxpayer from the Government's management of information technology.

According to official figures, the Government made £316 million worth of ICT savings last year, and data centres have a key role to play in these savings. In response to the question on achieving greater value for money, Francis Maude highlighted data centre provider, Ark Continuity, as an example of a company that could contribute to the savings programme. Ark, the UK's most efficient data centre provider, has developed a data centre model which can save organisations at least 40% of their costs through lower energy and operating costs using only the power and cooling needed by the IT load within the Data Rooms; this level of saving will increase further as energy prices rise.

Ark has secured funding that ensures its long-term future. The business also announced new senior leadership appointments to manage the expected growth, with Huw Owen joining as Chief Executive Officer, having previously been President of Global Health Care at BT. Steve Hall has been appointed as Sales Director from his previous position as UK Public Sector Sales Director at HP. Non-Executive Directors now include The Right Honourable Baroness Manningham-Buller, DCB, life peer in the House of Lords and former Director General of the Security Service (MI5) and Brian Fitzpatrick CEO of ACN Europe BV.

Francis Maude visited Ark's Spring Park Data Centre Campus in Corsham, Wiltshire 2012. During the fact-finding visit, Maude, Chippenham MP Duncan Hames along with representatives from the MOD discussed how companies like Ark can deliver cost-saving, secure solutions for the Government as part of their efficiency programme. He spoke about how agile and off-the-shelf ICT products can be better procured and used by the public sector to drive efficiency and reform in Government.

On his visit to Ark, Francis Maude commented, 'I enjoyed my visit with my Hon. Friend to Ark Continuity. It was very illuminating. There is a huge amount we can do. Data centre capacity across Government is massively under used. A huge amount of overcapacity was left in place by the outgoing Government, who had no interest in these subjects at all. We are getting to grips with it, however, we need to do more, and we will do so; there is much more money we can save.'