

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. MARY
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 30th NOVEMBER 2010**

Question

Given the continuing need to upgrade or replace Windows-based computer systems, can the Minister inform the Assembly whether an evaluation has ever been undertaken into the possibility of moving away from Windows to a different platform, and, if so, can he provide details of this evaluation, and if not, why not?

Answer

Use of open source operating systems and office tools was considered as part of the planning of the upgrade of the current systems and was rejected at this time for several reasons:

1. Analysis showed that the migration to Open Office (the most popular Open Source Office tool) would be at least twice as expensive as the migration to the latest version of Microsoft Office with the total cost of ownership over a 5 year period also being double.
2. The majority of the business and desktop applications used within the States of Jersey require Microsoft Windows, and this is anticipated to be the case until at least 2015. Often the software that is currently used is only available for Microsoft Windows.
3. The unfamiliarity of States system users with the open source environment.
4. Any saving would be made purely on license costs, which are the typical incentive for organisations to move to open source. They would be offset by additional costs to integrate applications; train users; train support staff; and on Microsoft License costs to connect Open Office to continuing applications etc.
5. The lack of experience in the States of Jersey and local suppliers in running an open source environment for an organisation of the scale and complexity of the States.

The Information Services Department will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation periodically.

Background Information

Open-source (OS) software is computer software that is available in source code form for which the source code and certain other rights normally reserved for copyright holders, eg Microsoft, are provided under a software license that permits users to study, change, and improve the software. Open source software is very often developed in a public, collaborative manner. The term open-source software originated as part of a marketing campaign for free software. A report by Standish Group states that adoption of open-source software models has resulted in savings of about \$60 billion per year to consumers. It is currently used in a consumer rather than business or government context.

World wide Linux constitutes only 2.7% of nonconsumer desktops and Open Source office products represent less than 5% of the business market. Whilst more applications are OS neutral, these will not account for the majority of applications until sometime after 2012 and even in 2017 organisations will still require a Windows operating system for 30% of there applications (Gartner, 2010, “The State of Open-Source Software on the Desktop”). Initial analysis using a Gartner migration cost modelling tool showed that the Migration to Open Office (the most popular Open Source Office tool) would be at least twice as expensive as the migration to the latest version of Microsoft Office with the total cost of ownership over a 5 year period also being double (Gartner, 2010 “Cost Model for Upgrading Microsoft Office or Moving to OpenOffice.org”).

Linux Desktop

In general, there has been little or no penetration of Linux on the desktop within UK government or business. Although there are some special use scenarios, the large number of Windows based applications in use continues to be a major barrier to Linux.

Open Source Office

Open Source office products are not 100% compatible with Microsoft Office, and documents may look or work differently than when created, which can be a problem for ongoing document interchange with other users or organizations that continue to run Microsoft Office.

The cost to convert documents to look or work properly in the Open Source office product may be high, eradicating some or all the cost benefit. This is further complicated by the use of macros within office document which often do not transfer to other office systems.

If a migration to an Open Source office system was undertaken some users will continue to require Microsoft Office for its capabilities or compatibility, which means administering and supporting a mixed environment.

Many products, from Microsoft and other independent software vendors (such as Microsoft Exchange, Sharepoint etc), integrate with Office, and have no such integration with other office systems.

Apple

Apple currently makes up approximately 1% of the enterprise desktops. The current apple platform lacks the ability to run the majority of the applications that are currently used within the States of Jersey.

In conclusion whilst some users could potentially be moved to an alternative environment, the majority would continue to require genuine Microsoft Windows with Microsoft Office, meaning that the States of Jersey would be operating a mixed environment with a significantly increased operational cost.