TNC17 Single Presentation Proposal

Title: Govroam in the UK: herding cats for fun and profit

Presenter: Mark O'Leary (mark.o'leary@jisc.ac.uk)

Affiliation: Jisc

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Biography: Mark is currently Head of Network Access within Jisc's Infrastructure division. While his responsibilities within the organisation have varied over time, from national-scale virtual hosting to Vscene, Jisc's videoconferencing service, the one constant has been federated roaming, starting from the LIN trials (Location Independent Networking, forerunner of eduroam in the UK), through the rollout and growth of eduroam and niche applications like access on public transport, to developing the eduroam companion app. For at least the past five years, it has been a goal to try and transfer some of the benefits of eduroam to the wider public sector in the UK, but despite being able to point to a "15 year pilot study" for govroam, such efforts have met with various difficulties. But now, it appears we have cracked it, and govroam in the UK is a reality.

Description:

Govroam is the result of the transfer of eduroam technology and policy from the education sphere to the wider public sector.

In the UK, public ICT provision has in the past been dominated by bespoke, highly secured services in isolated silos serving small constituencies, with much resulting duplication of effort. This is now changing more towards public and widely shared services accessed by multidisciplinary teams, secured at the application level rather than the network. One example driver is the need for social and health care provision to integrate, sharing case information and working together efficiently to deliver the best outcomes.

The govroam initiative seeks for the first time to allow public sector staff from health, local and central government and the blue light services to transparently access connectivity across their estates, making collaboration simpler, allowing efficient reuse of government facilities, improving the efficiency and reducing the overheads of a mobile workforce.

JIsc launched infrastructure to support such a service in September 2016 to early adopters, and at time of writing has ~300 govroam-enabled venues. By June 2017, we expect to launch a full service on a subscription basis with a greatly increased

footprint, and to have developed the beginnings of a commercial ecosystem of third-party providers to support public sector organisations wishing to join govroam.

However, the journey to govroam has not been smooth. Several previous attempts to launch such a service have been made, and have faltered for reasons ranging from a "Secure the network" mindset, through "There's no central funding" to "Sorry, we can't find out who runs our WLAN". Even today, govroam in the UK faces challenges, for example being seen as 'incomplete' since it doesn't address the public visitor problem.

This presentation will sketch the historical difficulties of getting govroam off the ground in the UK; describe the "grass roots" approach that seems to have finally unlocked the problem; examine the profile of adopting organisations and the use cases they are supporting; and look at the future where both an international dimension to govroam will be more important, and adding novel technical features to the design will bring more of a 'home LAN' environment to roaming users.

The content will hopefully prove beneficial to fellow NRENs facing similar difficulties making the case for govroam domestically, and serves as a strong example of an European education networking success being creatively redeployed to benefit a wider audience and save substantial amounts for the public purse.

It is also hoped that development of a govroam companion app may be completed in time for TNC17, allowing it to be launched internationally at the event as a tool to demonstrate the growth in the fledgling service across Europe and help individual users find their nearest connectivity options.